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THE
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- THE STATE OF THE STARS • THE STATE OF THE ART
- THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS
- THE STATE OF INTERNATIONAL

ALL-COLOR
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116 PAGES!

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Las Vegas sportsbooks now taking bets on pro wrestling!

None of these headlines appeared on 1wrestling.com.

If you didn't see it on 1wrestling.com, it probably wasn't true.

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PRO WRESTLING'S DAILY NEWS SOURCE

FROM THE DESK OF...

MAY HAVE made the biggest mistake of my life. I may have sold my soul to the Devil himself.

Or herself.

For almost five years I've been pestered, hounded, taunted, at times even threatened by Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz, whose lifelong mission is twofold: 1) To rid herself of the responsibility of compiling the "PW! 500," and 2) To have a magazine, under her direction, devoted exclusively to the seamier side of professional wrestling.

For the record, I'm theoretically opposed to such a magazine. Glorifying evil, quite frankly, makes me uncomfortable. But while I may run London Publishing, I don't own London Publishing, and my mandate from the man who does is to produce magazines that sell. One of the sad realities of wrestling in 2000 is that, in the eyes of far more than Brandi, bad is good.

Following in the footsteps of Dan Shocket and Eddie Ellner, she has openly campaigned for a forum to push her wicked ideals. We eventually reached a compromise. I gave her "The Magazine Within A Magazine," the 36-page center section in *Wrestle America* that was a revival of the *Wrestling Bad Guys* magazine.

Wrestle America prospered. She claimed it was because of *Bad Guys*; I said it was in spite of *Bad Guys*.

As much as I hate to admit it, she was right. A telephone survey of a cross-section of our subscribers reveals that 40 percent bought *Wrestle America* because of *Bad Guys*; 30 percent would have subscribed just for the main portion of the magazine, but felt *Bad Guys* enhanced the product; and the rest were either undecided or said they would have preferred that *Bad Guys* not be included. The only thing this survey of subscribers could not tell us is how many people would not buy the magazine because of *Bad Guys*.

I can't deny the obvious. Bad isn't just good; it's great. And the time has come to give Brandi (and a whole lot of *Bad Guys* loyalists) what they want.

On December 12, London Publishing is proud (?) to present *DQ*. At 132 pages, it's *Bad Guys* x 3.7. It's all-color, it's printed on glossy stock, and it's loaded with the best of *Bad Guys* along with a whole lot more. And while I remain theoretically opposed to the concept of a magazine that caters to our evil instincts, even I must admit that this is a product that's worth your attention. Kind of like Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It's not a publication whose message you will find tasteful, but it's one whose historical significance cannot be ignored.

Okay, maybe that's a little overstated. Brandi was just near my desk, and I can assure you she doesn't have a little mustache. But there are some wicked thoughts racing through her mind. Will she have free reign? Yes. As long as we've gone this far, there's no sense in sicking the RTC on her. But there is one thing: Just as Brandi gets a dissenting voice in *PW!* with "Off The Top Rope", yours truly will be given the same opportunity in *DQ*.

As stated on the cover beneath the *DQ* logo, this is "The Magazine That's Not PC." I fully expect that my viewpoint will be mocked by Brandi and I'll be made to look ridiculous to the magazine's readers. But I don't care. I know my heart is red, not black, and my heart tells me that, money issues aside, a magazine like *DQ* does not have a place in society.

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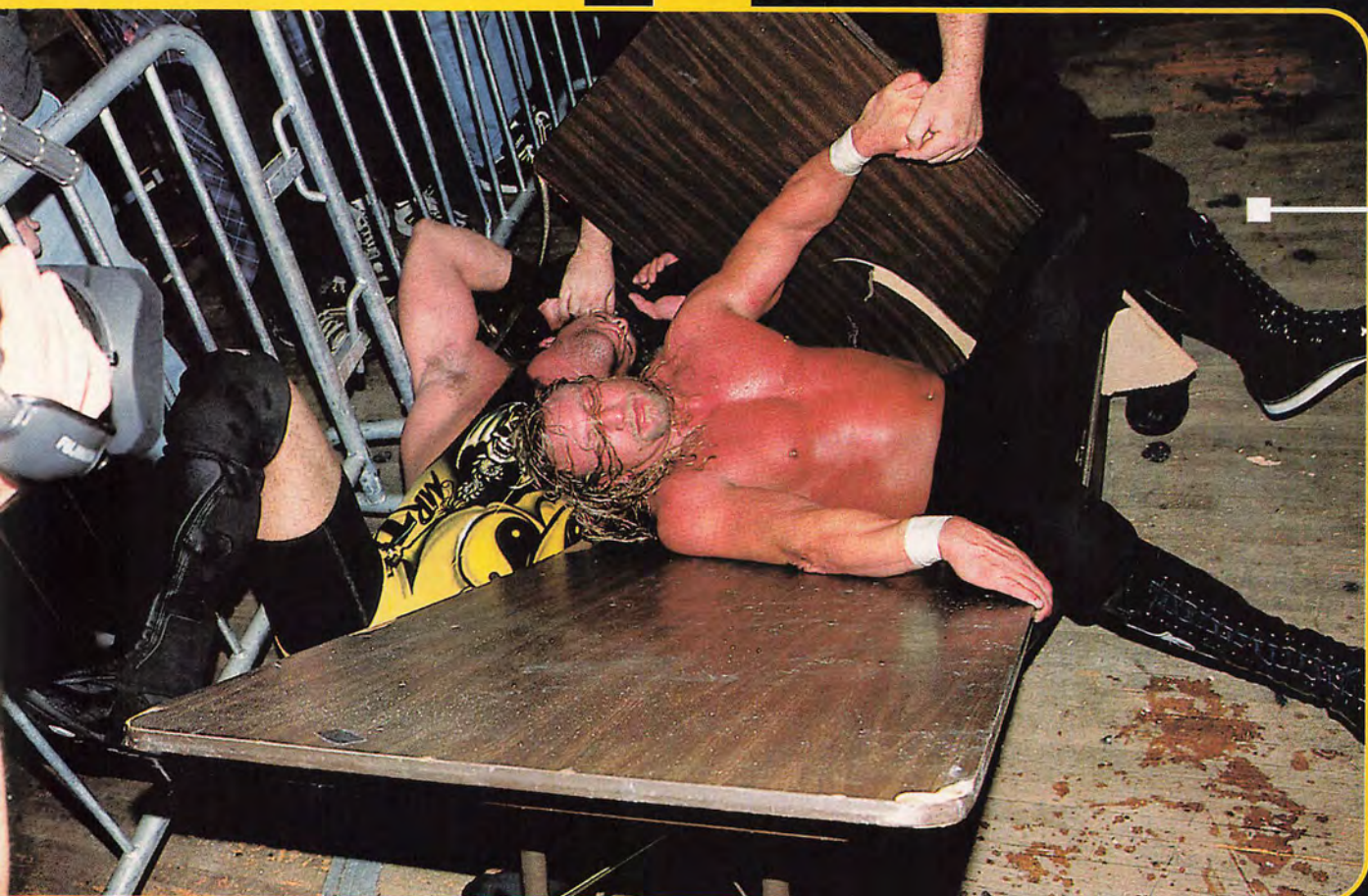
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PWT

THE STATE OF THE GAME

FEBRUARY 2001

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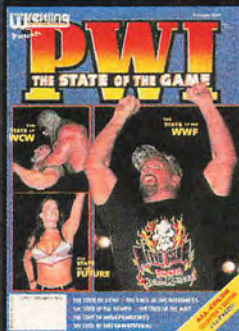
The WWF is the only big American company that is thriving right now. Might that change soon?

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It's never easy to predict where the sport will be six months from now, let alone a few years from now. But we've tried our best

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ON SALE DECEMBER 26, 2000



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Scott Steiner-Bill Goldberg
by Steve Beyer
Lita by John S. Pithers
COVER DESIGN:
Teresa Landis

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before the bell

Compiled By Will Welsh

ERIC BISCHOFF TO UPN?

First, UPN embraced Vince McMahon and the WWF with the addition of *Smackdown* to its weekly lineup. Then McMahon and UPN made a deal to bring McMahon's

XFL to the network. Now UPN has embraced McMahon's most persistent and successful rival ever—Eric Bischoff.

No, Bischoff is not launching an initiative to bring WCW programming to UPN. But Bischoff *is* bringing his newest brainchild to the network, and, like WCW, this show will be chock-full of testosterone.

Road Rage, set to debut this winter, promises to be a bang-'em-up action program filled with devastating car crashes and maniacal stunt drivers. But that description doesn't really do *Road Rage* justice. Bischoff's description, however, does.

"It's kind of like a really cool, high-tech version of demolition derby meets wrestling, kind of meets *Judge Judy*," Bischoff told *PWI*. "That being said, we're going to try to solicit real people, real motorheads, real gearheads, to build their own cars and come in and compete against these character stunt drivers that we have. And they're real over-the-top kind of characters. Their cars are kind of futuristic; it's not like the demolition derby you saw when you were a kid."

Of course, bringing the show to UPN, a network intricately tied to the WWF, was a bit intimidating for Bischoff.

"It really hit me the very first time we went in there for a pitch," he said. "I kind of felt like I was infiltrating enemy territory, and I was behind the lines, and one of the guerrillas was going to come out of the corner at any minute and go, 'Hey! What are you doing here?!'"

Bischoff must have survived the guerrillas long enough to entice UPN executives to give the idea a go. Whether or not we see Triple-H and The Rock do a run-in on the show and wreck the set remains to be seen.



THE ROCK ROCKS HOLLYWOOD

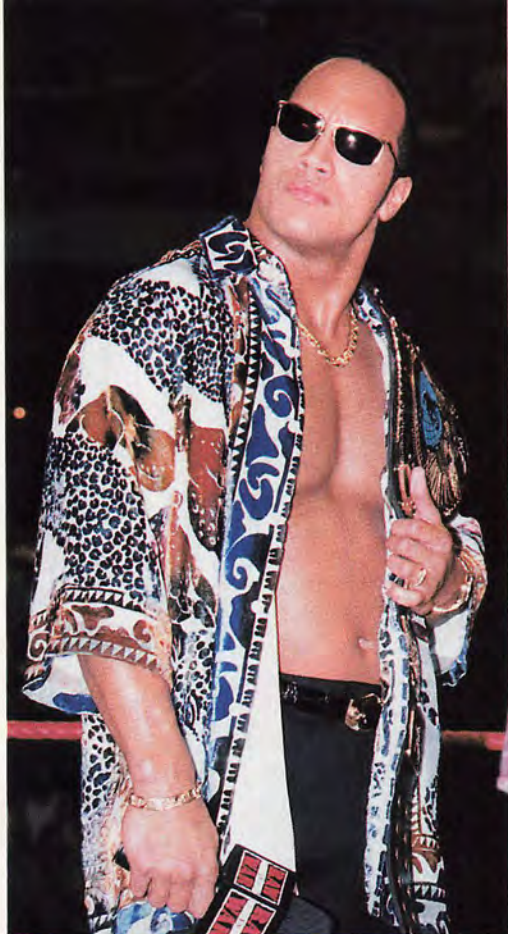
He's at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. He's at the MTV Video Music Awards. He's on Jay Leno. He's on C-SPAN, CNN, MSNBC, and every other cable channel that can get an interview with him. And now The Rock is coming to the big screen—and he's getting a whole wad of money to do so.

According to *Variety*, Rock has signed to make *The Scorpion King* for a stone-cold stunning \$5.5-million—"one of the highest sums paid an actor in his first starring role."

The Rock caught the eye of movie producers earlier this year with his portrayal of The Scorpion King character in the not-yet-released *The Mummy II*. In fact, Rock impressed the Hollywood mavens so much that they created the script for *The Scorpion King* especially for him.

"When we watched The Rock in dailies of *The Mummy II*, his charisma jumped out at us and we created a story that has a pre-history context, adventure, and humor," Universal Pictures President Kevin Misher told *Variety*. "This is not a premise that's reliant on his wrestling abilities. It's a terrific template for the birth of an action hero."

Now, we hate to tell Misher that he's about two years too late in the creation of an action hero called The Rock, but what the heck, after seeing Hulk Hogan fiascoes like *Suburban Commando* and *The Nanny*, we can forgive Hollywood for forgetting the star power that comes with being a pro wrestler. We're just left to wonder whether Rock's movie career is going to go the way of Hogan's. We sure hope not.



A CHUMP AND A CHAMP

With his slimmed down physique, The Blue Boy has become one of the most obnoxious wrestlers in the world. So obnoxious, in fact, that he challenged former boxing world heavyweight champion Ken Norton to a bout in our Ambler offices (the two were scheduled for a photo set on the same day).

"Yeah, I challenged Norton, but the *champ* backed down like a scared kitten when he saw who was doing the challenging," said Blue. "I mean, I know that I look like a Greek Adonis come down from Mount Olympus to all the fat slobs that read this magazine, but I expected better out of the champ."

Blue is obviously delusional, because the only reason Norton didn't take Blue out to the woodshed is he didn't want to embarrass Blue in front of Blue's girlfriend, Jasmin St. Claire. If the fight had gone down, we're pretty sure Norton, who once broke Muhammad Ali's jaw, would have made our offices look like the aftermath of a tornado-ravaged Smurf village.



THE STUPID FILES

•Call us male chauvinistic pigs if you want to (Brandi does all the time), but the men at *PWI* have a complaint: Stacy Keibler turned down an offer from *Penthouse* to be featured in an upcoming *Penthouse* pictorial.

Aghhhhhh!

Okay, now that we've turned our vocal cords into cooked spaghetti, it's time to explain why this particular news item qualifies as a stupid file:

How about because we and every other male on this round, green and blue planet we call Earth would love to see it?!

Selfish? You bet. But our criticism is also sound.

Right now, Keibler is one of WCW's most popular stars—and it's not because of her wrestling or acting abilities. It's because of her, well ... heck, you know why the girl's popular! We shouldn't have to spell it out for you! Take a gander at that skirt and those gams for cryin' out loud!

Oops, sorry about that. We're feeling awfully defensive as we write this. On to the argument.

Keibler's a popular girl. A pictorial featuring her in *Penthouse* would certainly be a hot commodity. And not only would a large percentage of WCW fans be lined up at the corner magazine stand waiting to purchase an issue for their own personal perusing, just imagine the number of sickos who receive *Penthouse* on a monthly basis who would also get a gander at Keibler. Imagine how many new WCW fans she could create for the company! Rednecks galore, we tell you! Rednecks galore!

Now, we know there are going to be individuals out there who will take us to task for deriding Keibler's decision. And you know what? Anyone who does has every right to do so. Who are we to tell a beautiful woman to take her clothes off? Who are we to lament the situation just because we find our own personal lives unfulfilling? Who are we to call David Flair a *blankety-blank* every time we pull a picture of Keibler out of our files?

You know, it's time to end this stupid file. We've already done enough damage.

•Speaking of damage, hasn't Bret Hart been tormented enough? It's not as if the guy is pleased with professional wrestling as it is, but to have your former employer—the employer who screwed you out of the WWF World heavyweight title in front of your very own countrymen—rip off your nickname and give it to one of his new football teams, well, that's just rotten.

Now, the New York/New Jersey Hitmen aren't the only team in Vince McMahon's XFL to have a wrestling-related moniker. There's also the Los Angeles Xtreme (Kristy Myst gonna lead the cheers?), San Francisco Demons (enter Dale Torborg—the XFL's answer to Minnesota Viking John Randle), Chicago Enforcers (Arn Anderson would make a great head coach), and the Las Vegas Outlaws (oh, you didn't know?), among others. But even if the XFL is replete with

other wrestling-related names, one would think that McMahon would stay away from using a name that's so tied to his most controversial employee of all-time.

As an added twist to this mess, the NHL's Calgary Flames—the owners of the Calgary Hitmen, the minor league hockey team of which Hart was once part owner—have considered suing the XFL over copyright issues.

Yes, the New York/New Jersey Hitmen is a great name. It's tough. It's bold. It's aggressive. It's everything the XFL wants and promises to be.

But given the circumstances, it should have also been considered out of bounds.

(continued on page 10)



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WE HEARD THAT!

"I think it would be a sad epitaph for a guy who has never hurt anyone in 23 years of wrestling to go out with a brain injury. I don't want to be remembered as 'that guy in that documentary,' and especially not as 'that guy who got double-crossed in Montreal.'"

—Bret Hart, in his September 9 *Calgary Sun* column

"What kind of crack could I give him? He's got a mighty big crack already."

—Al Snow, when asked what kind of crack he gave WWF Commissioner Mick Foley after Foley mistakenly referred to Triple-H as the WWF champion at the September 4 *Raw*, on the Wrestling Guys Radio Show in Ohio

"Obviously, I'm not going out there and being the exact character I was in the past or being the character that I want to be, but there's nothing you can do about that. [WCW's] a larger corporation. You can either fight the system or just do the best you can at it. Don't take yourself out of the game, that's what I say."

—Mike Awesome, discussing his "That '70s Guy" gimmick in an interview on 1wrestling.com

"You watch the news and you get frightened and don't want to talk to any other human being. Then you switch the channel to our show and go, 'Ooh, what fun.'"

—WWF diva Ivory, in a *Los Angeles Times* article about the success of the WWF

"I've had a lust for violence since I was a kid. Fighting is in my blood, in my heart and soul. I am a pit fighter. If I'm going to fight you, I'm going to hurt you. This isn't a controlled dojo environment."

—Tank Abbott, in a *Playboy* article about pit fighting

"A body like mine has been rejected for so many years. Not the ideal beauty. Ugly, masculine. But doing *Playboy* for me is the pinnacle. And I'm very proud ... It was, 'Look at me. Here I am.' Now people love the



body. It's about damn time."

—Chyna, discussing her *Playboy* layout in *TV Guide*

"I can tell you categorically that there has been no conversation taking place between myself, Mandalay, and WCW about a buyout."

—Eric Bischoff, dismissing rumors that he's spearheading an attempt by Mandalay Sports to buy WCW in the *Charleston Post And Courier*

"Every day is tough. You wake up and pray, but the bottom line is, I survive."

—Paralyzed WWF wrestler Darren Drozdov, in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article □

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors here at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This picture of a grouchy "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin yelling across the ring to an oblivious Kane needs a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your delectable little quips to PWIFocus@aol.com or throw a 33-cent stamp on an envelope and make the postal workers of America slave even harder for their money by mailing your suggestions to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three months from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better. □



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RINGSIDE

With Will Welsh

THE HOTTEST RUMOR going around the WWF at press time concerned the ongoing "**Stone-Cold**" **Steve Austin** hit-and-run saga. But there was also another rumor being discussed among members of the WWF's locker room—and so far, this one hasn't made it to TV: **Steven Richards** might be on his way out as the leader of **Right To Censor**.

Rumors started erupting around the RTC camp right about the time **Val Venis** joined the group. Some WWF insiders

say that Venis only joined the group to attack it from within. Others say that Venis, tired of his adult film star image, joined Right To Censor in order to remake himself. But one thing they're all saying is that no matter why Venis joined the RTC, he's had one goal in mind since debuting in the dairy man's outfit: to displace Richards as the RTC's leader.

"Look at the group," said one source close to the situation. "**Bull Buchanan** has yet to prove himself on his own. So far, he's

either been doing the bidding of **Big Bossman** or Richards. He's an easily controllable lummoX. So is **The Godfather**—I mean, Goodfather. Then you have Richards, and you know all about him. Val, though—Val's different. He's never taken orders from anybody and he's always done his own thing. He's in this to take over the RTC and have the group do his bidding. He wouldn't have joined any other way."

In the weeks leading up to *Raw's* move to TNN, it sure seemed like Venis was taking a more vocal position in the group. While Richards was still the RTC's official leader, it seemed Venis had become the group's official spokesman. When questioned, however, Venis had nothing but praise for Richards and his leadership style.

"Steven has taken the RTC, made a name for it, and successfully implemented the group's agenda," Venis said. "And he did

Steven Richards was able to bring Bull Buchanan under his control in Right To Censor. However, Richards' latest recruit, Val Venis, might want to be more than just another member of Richards' organization.



that before I even arrived. If it wasn't for Steven, this group would have never gotten off the ground. I'm just here to support him."

We'll see in the coming months if Venis is true to his word or if he still has a bit of that Las Vegas swagger in him.

Undoubtedly, the feel-good story of October was **Jerry Lynn's** upset of ECW World champion **Justin Credible** at Anarchy Rulz in St. Paul, Minnesota. Granted, I don't believe Lynn will be ECW World champ when this magazine hits the newsstands, but it's always good to see a deserving wrestler such as Lynn finally get his due.

"To have won the title in front of the great fans of the Twin Cities meant so much," Lynn said a few days after the win. "I've bled buckets in ECW, and to represent this company as its World champion ... I really can't tell you how good it feels."

It's amazing. Who thought Lynn would hold ECW's World title before **Rob Van Dam**? Certainly no one in this office.

[Editor's note: The State of the Game reports included events through September 30. They will not reflect the October 1 ECW title change.]

A new NWA heavyweight champion was crowned on September 19 in the form of "**Colorado Kid**" **Mike Rapada**. Rapada, who spent much of this past year working as part of WCW's **R & B Security**, was a last-minute entrant in the NWA's title tournament. Rapada defeated veteran **Hector Guerrero** in the quarter-finals and "**Lightning Foot**" **Jerry Flynn** in the finals of the tournament (he received a bye in the semis). Former ECW heavyweight champion **Sabu**, however, destroyed Rapada's post-match festivities by attacking the newly crowned champ and attempting to put him through a table. Though Sabu's attempt to injure Rapada failed because



In front of his hometown fans in St. Paul, Minnesota, Jerry Lynn defeated ECW World champion Justin Credible to win his first world heavyweight title. With his win, he became ECW's classiest World champion ever.

the backstage area emptied and wrestlers ran off the madman, he still managed to secure Rapada's attention. We could be in for a long feud between these two.

As soon as **Mick Foley** was named WWF commissioner, wrestlers immediately placed odds on how long it would take the hardcore legend to come out of retirement. Right now, it looks like those who put their money somewhere around the half-year mark might find themselves the winner of this awfully cruel office pool—and they might have **Chris Benoit** to thank for their windfall.

"I don't care if Foley's retired or not," Benoit said when I

caught up with him backstage. "He's stolen my WWF title on two different occasions now, once at Fully Loaded and once at Unforgiven. If he thinks I'm gonna lay down and let him get away with screwing with my life just because he's retired, he better think again. He's going to wish he had never taken the damn commissionership."

Foley had to know something like this was eventually going to happen. The job of WWF commissioner is not an easy one. The decisions you make impact the lives of some very large and irritable men. In the WWF, it's one thing to wield power by using

(Continued on page 98)

In focus

By Dave Lenker



Does this look like a generous, kind-hearted man? Those are two words that aren't often used to describe Vince McMahon. Vinnie Mac did, however, seem to do a very nice thing by allowing ECW to continue airing on TNN.

KINDER, GENTLER VINCE?

Weren't we all surprised when as the final edition of *ECW On TNN* drew to a close, blow-by-blow man Joey Styles *didn't* take a final fitting cheap shot at the network that had done so little to promote ECW during the past year? Not even a silly, pathetic, predictable cheap shot.

Instead, he delivered a promo for the following week's edition of (not *Raw Is War*) *ECW On TNN*.

By now, you've probably figured out that the September 22 edition of *ECW On TNN* was not the finale of *ECW On TNN*. And who do we have to thank for this but Vincent K. McMahon Jr. himself!

This couldn't be the same Vince McMahon who wiped out numerous regional promotions as he took the WWF national in the 1980s. The same ruthless businessman who, after complaining for several years that he couldn't compete with Ted Turner's bank account, decided to put Eric Bischoff and WCW in their place and make Bischoff forever regret boasting that looking at the Monday ratings wasn't fun anymore. The same McMahon who had the guts to start a new football league because he thought the NFL was the "No Fun League."

Yep, same tyrannical Vinnie Mac.

The deal he reached with Viacom gave the WWF the exclusive right to broadcast wrestling on TNN, but just days before that last ECW show was supposed to air, Vince waived that clause and allowed ECW to continue airing through the end of the year or until it found a new cable home (which probably will have happened by the time you read this).

This was not only a generous move, but a very smart one on McMahon's part. What did he have to lose by doing it? It wasn't as if TNN was suddenly going to start vigorously promoting ECW. It's not like *ECW On TNN* was suddenly going to start doing 3s and 4s rather than 0.8s and 0.9s. And it's not like ECW has any chance whatsoever of taking over the WWF's spot as the number-one wrestling company in the U.S.

By giving ECW a much-needed break, McMahon strengthened his relationship with Paul Heyman, who has no problem admitting he holds McMahon in high regard. Remember, the two companies have had a working agreement for years. Al Snow's last stint in ECW (where his use of Head first became popular) happened because McMahon allowed it to happen. Snow was under contract to the WWF the entire time, but because the WWF had nothing planned for him, McMahon let him go to ECW. Eventually, McMahon brought him back.

When McMahon decided he wanted The Dudley Boyz, Heyman saw to it that their transition from ECW to the WWF was a smooth one.

You may have heard the rumors around the time Mike Awesome jumped from ECW to WCW that ECW and WCW were going to start working together. That didn't happen, and those rumors aren't likely to start up again, because I'd have a hard time envisioning Heyman doing anything to cross McMahon at this point.

Kinder, gentler Vince? Nah. Just as shrewd and smart as ever.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The main reason I was excited about sitting down to watch the Unforgiven pay-per-view inside the First Union Center in Philadelphia was the main reason about 19,000 other people were excited about sitting down to watch the Unforgiven pay-per-view inside the First Union Center in Philadelphia: Steve Austin's return.

We all expected he'd get a gigantic pop, he'd talk some trash, and he'd stun a few people to send us all home happy.

Check.

Check.

Check.

We got all three.

I was more curious to see if there would be something new, something fresh about "Stone-Cold." I have to say that while I enjoyed his segment with Shane McMahon immensely that night, I walked out of the building a little disappointed. I subsequently talked to others who felt let down by Austin's return at Unforgiven and his first few appearances back in the WWF after that.

I, too, was thinking Austin needed to turn or The Rock needed to turn to really shake things up at the top of the WWF. Thinking Austin needed to add something to his in-ring presentation if he was going to remain the top man in the business for long. Thinking Austin was in danger of having the fans turn against him within a few months.

Just as I started to write about this, my thinking started to change.

I began thinking that maybe those of us who report on and write about wrestling for a living are guilty of being a little jaded at times. Maybe we're a lot jaded at times. Maybe we overanalyze situations and wrestlers' performances, looking for tiny flaws instead of just sit-

ting back and enjoying what we're seeing for what it is.

I've heard a lot of people criticize The Rock over the past few months for getting stale and predictable. Yet when you go to a WWF show, the response to his arrival in the arena remains as loud as ever.

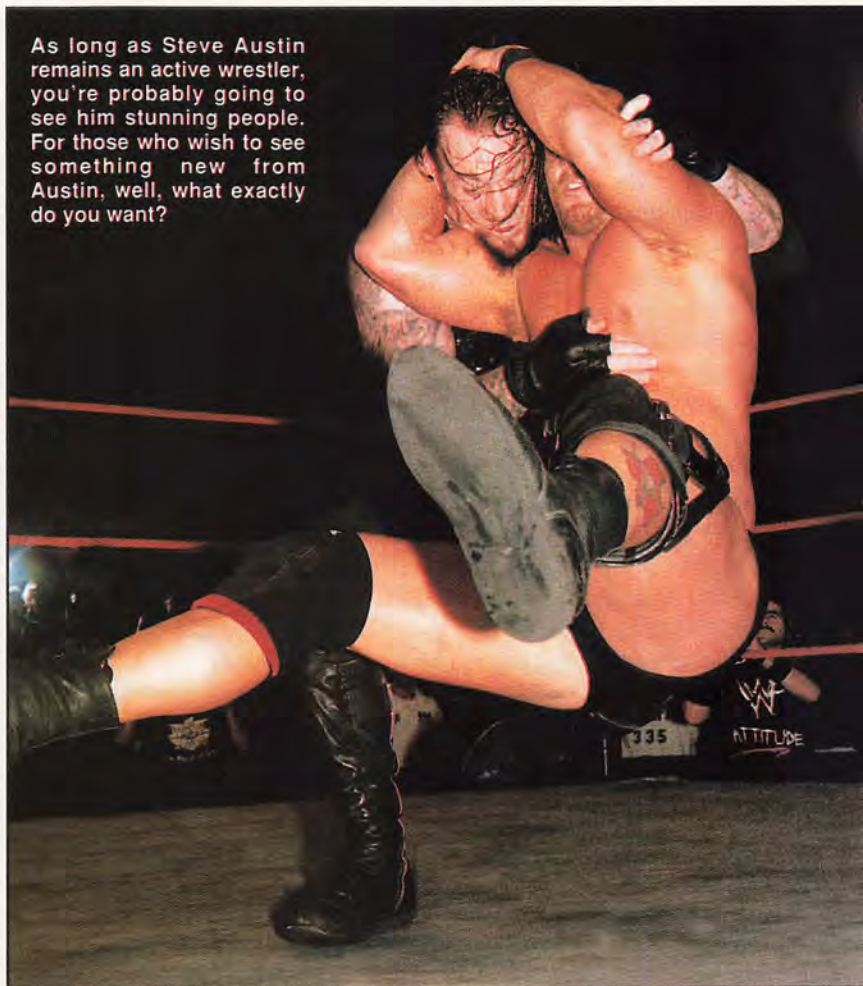
Yes, Austin is doing a lot of the same things now that he was doing two years ago. But he's still a man with great charisma and a great dry wit, and he brings so much energy and intensity to the ring with him. When the time comes, I'm sure he will turn, but how much more can an Austin (or a Rock, for that matter) add to his in-ring presentation? Is "Stone-Cold" going to start using the huracanrana as his finisher? More colorful tights perhaps?

There are only so many ways wrestlers, TV writers, and creative directors can reinvent these people you see on *Raw*, *Nitro*, *Smackdown*, and *Thunder* every week.

Sometimes we just demand too much from these people.

(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in **PWI**? You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at PWIFocus@aol.com.) □

As long as Steve Austin remains an active wrestler, you're probably going to see him stunning people. For those who wish to see something new from Austin, well, what exactly do you want?



Off the Top Rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to
contribute to
Brandi's mailbag,
send your letters to:

TOP ROPE

Box 1148
Ft. Washington, PA
19034

Or send e-mail to:
OffTheTopRope
@yahoo.com

Ray had the right idea when he joined the NWO a long time ago, but, unfortunately, he just isn't as talented as Booker. But even with his talent, I doubt anyone will even remember Booker T a decade from now. He just doesn't have longevity, in my book.

Dear Brandi,

Do you think it was a good idea for The Radicals to break up and then turn against each other? I know that Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero have benefited greatly from it, but what about Perry Saturn and Dean Malenko? What should Saturn and Malenko do to gain more success? Keep up the good work, Queen, and keep on keeping it real!

PHILLIP J. LANIDES
San Jose, CA

Dear Phillip,

It was cute the way The Radicals collectively asked for their releases from WCW. It was also cute how they came into the WWF together as one big "buy-two-get-two-free" sale. But, luckily, Benoit and Guerrero soon realized that loyalty gets you nowhere.

THE SKIES KEEP rumbling above WCW. Maybe it's the sound of WCW executives cleaning out their desks before heading to higher ground. Maybe it's just the sound of Vince McMahon moving new, more expensive furniture into his office in Stamford. Whichever it is, it's pretty darn noisy. But one thing is for sure: There's something rotten in the state of WCW.

While the foreboding sky has yet to release any rain, WCW, on the other hand, has released a gaggle of grapplers to relieve the pressure on its swollen, grossly mismanaged payroll. This release hasn't done much to hinder the company's weekly shows. "Creative genius" Vince Russo has taken care of that one all by himself. Mark Jindrak and Sean O'Haire as World tag team champions? Sorry, but this one is even lower than the Ding Dongs in my book. Why not just ban top rope maneuvers and call it a Bill Watts territory?

But don't fret, my precious pets, I will shield you from the torrential downpour. Like a voluptuous vixen in a wet T-shirt contest, I will soak up all of that nasty rain so you only get to see the rainbow at the end of the storm ... and the Ding Dongs with the WCW World tag title. And, yes, I am your champion ... wet T-shirt and all.

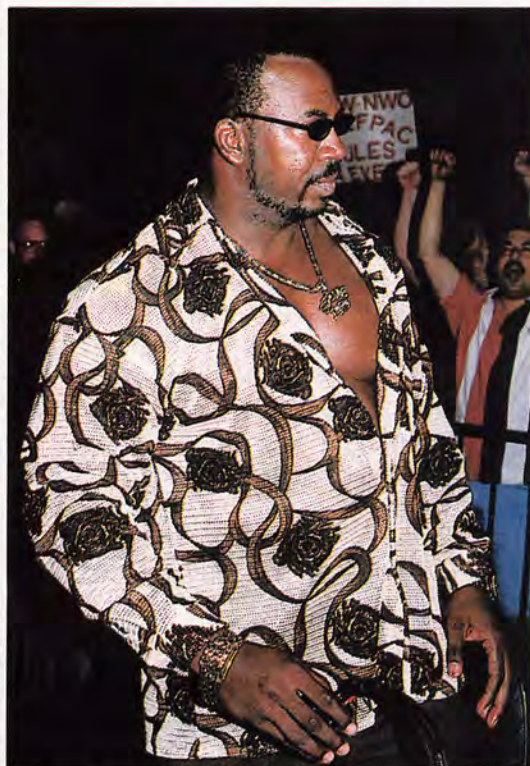
Dear Brandi,

Booker T, the real champion in WCW, has finally shown up, and everyone will now see a great performer. No more guitars, no more straitjacket freaks, and no more "Nature Boy." The new WCW has finally seen the light by taking Jarrett for what he is, a crybaby. Jarrett is better as a contender than as champion. The fans want to see action and awesome wrestling. That equals Booker T, and even you will admit that you have the hots for Booker now that he's been the World champion. The man has earned his spot today by waiting in the pecking order and going through so many management changes. He is a classy guy who gives the fans what they pay for: entertainment. Booker will be a force to be reckoned with for a long time. Once he proves himself to be the best champion in WCW in about a decade, the fans will boost the ratings for WCW.

OSCAR F. LOPEZ
JnetteNoscar@cs.com

Dear Oscar,

Booker T does nothing for me, but I do respect his ability. I just think that he would have gotten to the top a heck of a lot sooner if he didn't pander to the fans so much. The fans have never been in the ring, so they shouldn't have a say in his career choices. Personally, I think Stevie



Ray was on the right track when he joined the New World Order. Now, though, the only thing Stevie is capable of is hyping his pansy of a brother, Booker T, whenever Booker graces *Thunder* with his presence.

If loyalty was a good thing, all four would still be WCW mid-carders, wrestling in front of a few dozen fans. If Saturn and Malenko want to climb to the heights reached by the other two, they should also learn to backstab and butt-kiss. It's the only way to get ahead in this day and age.

Brandi,

I used to be a big WCW fan, but after watching it for the past couple of months, I have noticed that it's really going downhill. When will WCW realize it's fighting a losing battle and give up?

MICAH BRYANT
vortex_swirl@yahoo.com

Note to Vince Russo:

Congratulations, you have successfully alienated the only fan WCW had left. If the hardcore WCW fan can pick up on the death vibes put out by the company, then I think it is time for you to toss in the towel. It's the only honorable thing to do.

Dear Brandi,

What's up with everyone booing King Kurt? He is an Olympic hero and a great wrestler. As fans, we should cheer for such a great wrestler. He speaks the truth and actually knows how to wrestle. He proved this at King of the Ring, but the fans still boo him. Why?

JENNIFER B.
spinelli_01@hotmail.com

Dear Jennifer,

The fans are jealous. They just don't know how to handle themselves when faced with greatness. It's true. It's true.

Dear Brandi,

Can you give me a clue as to when ECW wrestling is going to cross the border into Canada?

BRAD McDONNELL
bevondudley@hotmail.com

Dear Brad,

They already did. You missed them.

Dear Queen Brandi:

I have been a loyal reader of your column for the past 3½ years. I am amazed by how much you know about the sport! I would like to know how

many live events you attend each year. I frequently attend WWF, ECW, and WCW cards, as well as many independents. I find that WCW cards are deader than The Undertaker used to be. WWF fans are wild, and ECW has the most personal atmosphere to me. Which federation's live cards do you most enjoy attending?

WES ADAMS
wesa007@yahoo.com

Dear Underling,

Your letter reads like you are amazed that a chick can retain a vast knowledge of the sport. My superior intellect is the reason I'm here at PWI and the reason you worship me. Now, I don't like to sit in my office for too long, so I do attend several shows a month. You'll most often find me at independent shows, because I enjoy the *Deliverance* atmosphere. I like to watch the toothless fans interact with the wrestlers, falling all over themselves just because their hero of the week signed their shirt. I do frequent the Big Three as well, but I like to be segmented from the common population at those shows since the fans are somehow stranger.

Dear Brandi:

Do you think Triple-H is going to turn into a fan favorite? I think he will before the year is over because the fans seem to hate Kurt Angle more than him. What do you think?

DONALD COOK
Red6nz@hotmail.com

Dear Donald:

Triple-H has already sold his soul for the cheers of the crowd. I always figured him to be weak in the ways of vanity and ego, and I thought he'd sell out long before this. I am disappointed that he built up such a great evil persona, only to trash it for the fickle fans. Ultimately, it's just a sign of insecurity and waning self-esteem. If he needs the approval of the masses, then



This is about the scariest you're going to see Triple-H get now that he has turned away from the dark side. See what the need for approval and acceptance can do to a man? It's absolutely disgusting.

I suggest he leave the dark side before he disgraces us any more.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

Dear Queen Brandi,

For the last couple of years, I have been an avid follower of your columns in PWI and all of its sister magazines, but lately your columns have been a bit of a disappointment. All you seem to be writing about lately is people grammar mistakes instead of telling it how it is in the wrestling world. So please stop correcting everyone on their errors and go back to the writer that you use to be

KRIS WOODALL
Woodallkris@hotmail.com

Kris,

Jeez, you're right. I have been an absolute tyrant. I just don't know what to say. Wait, yes I do. I'd just like to tell you to grab a dictionary and look up the spelling of the word "grammar." See, I'm being nice. I haven't even pointed out your other mistakes. □

KREW-CUTS

By Frank Krewda

Fanfare. Even though the action at WWF Unforgiven was hot, what struck me the most about the pay-per-view on September 24 was the dead crowd. I've been to dozens of shows in Philadelphia over the years, and I can't remember seeing a crowd so lifeless.

Of course, the folks at the First Union Center gave the obligatory pop for Mick Foley's cheap heat, The Rock's promos, and Steve Austin's stunners, but other than that, you wouldn't have suspected there were close to 20,000 fans

crammed into that building.

And that got me thinking. There was once a time when I would put the Philly fans up there with any other crowd as the best in the sport. But now I'm not so sure—and that must mean that either the fans in other cities have improved, or Philly fans have regressed. Maybe it's a little of both.

Regardless, crowds are different. Just like the wrestlers they cheer or boo, fans have their own personalities and characteristics—some good, some bad, but all unique.

Below, I've profiled some North American crowds by what they do best (and worst).

The Loudest: (Tie) Houston/Atlanta. Hate to start out by hedging my opinions. But the fact is, when WCW was filling the Astrodome and the Georgia Dome back in 1997 and '98, there was nothing that could equal the noise generated in both those buildings (e.g. check out the Bill Goldberg vs. Hulk Hogan match from July 5, 1998).

The Biggest: Atlanta. The WWF routinely draws 25,000-plus in WCW's backyard. There's something to be said for the size of the Georgia Dome, but Atlanta fans love their wrestling.

Most Absent: Baltimore. It's not my intention to pick on WCW here, but nowadays, the company rarely draws more than 5,000 fans (paid) to a PPV card in this wrestling hotbed—and that's shocking. I guess with Camden Yards, an improved Ravens team, and a glistening waterfront to

enjoy, there's more to do than just go to the matches.

Biggest Front-runners: Toronto. Sure, they'll come out—as long as there's a Canadian on the card. Unless Bret Hart, Chris Benoit, or Chris Jericho shows up, you could hear a pin drop at the Air Canada Centre.

Most Overlooked: Portland, Oregon. Wrestling tends to avoid this town simply because of its strict drug-testing policy, although the indies seem to manage. Pittsburgh comes in a close second. ECW hasn't run a show there in ages, and Lex Luger didn't do anything to help WCW in the city when he turned in a



On the first *Raw* on TNN, Steve Austin gave the WWF fans of State College, Pennsylvania, a bonus when he attacked Kurt Angle. Frank Krewda says the fans in State College are among the most surprising in the sport.

lethargic effort against The Giant a few years ago—and then made light of it.

Most Forgotten:

Tie (Hamburg, PA/Calgary/Los Angeles). Hamburg was once the cog of WWF TV, and Calgary has produced some of the sport's greatest wrestlers. Now both towns must make due with indy groups. L.A. and San Francisco used to be the hottest wrestling towns on the West Coast in the '60s and '70s. These days, they're little more than pit stops on the pro circuit, although some wrestlers claim they're still great "heel" cities.

Most Enthusiastic:

Dallas, by far. It doesn't matter who's wrestling in "Big D," the fans are up for every show. They enter the arena at fever pitch and maintain a loud intensity until the very end.

Dullest: Philadelphia. Philly loves its heroes (Bruno Sammartino, Hogan, Austin, Rock, Rob Van Dam) but just doesn't seem to care about anyone else. It takes a whole lot to keep these fans on their feet. Preventing them from hurling insults at the wrestlers and each other is a tough task, too.

Most Obnoxious: It's a tossup between Uniondale, Long Island, and Chicago. Check out the amount of garbage tossed in the ring at the conclusion of a show and you'll see what I mean. That's not to mention the sarcastic barbs they throw at the wrestlers. Uniondale is notorious among pros for being an especially tough place to work.

Most Violent: In the '70s, Vancouver Canucks fans were known to attack an opposing player or two after—or even during—a hockey game. The wrestling fans are worse. By all ac-

counts, a WWF card at the GM Palace is not a safe place to be if you're a fan.

Most Spoiled: Charlotte. Sure, it's easy to get up for a show when you know Ric Flair's gonna be on the card, but God forbid if he's not. The fans will either not show up or boo from the opening bell to the last pinfall.

Most Surprising: Tie (Worcester, MA/State College, PA/Fargo, ND/Rosemont, IL). Either these fans are starved for wrestling or there isn't much to do on a Monday night in these places. Either way, these cities have become key stops for the WWF and WCW because these fans bring their "A" game whenever wrestling comes to town.

Most Knowledgeable: St. Louis. These folks have seen just about every great wrestler of the century perform at one point or another: Lou Thesz, Harley Race, Sammartino, Flair, Hogan, and Dick the Bruiser have all headlined St. Louis. It was also one of the most important territories in the country when that distinction actually meant something.

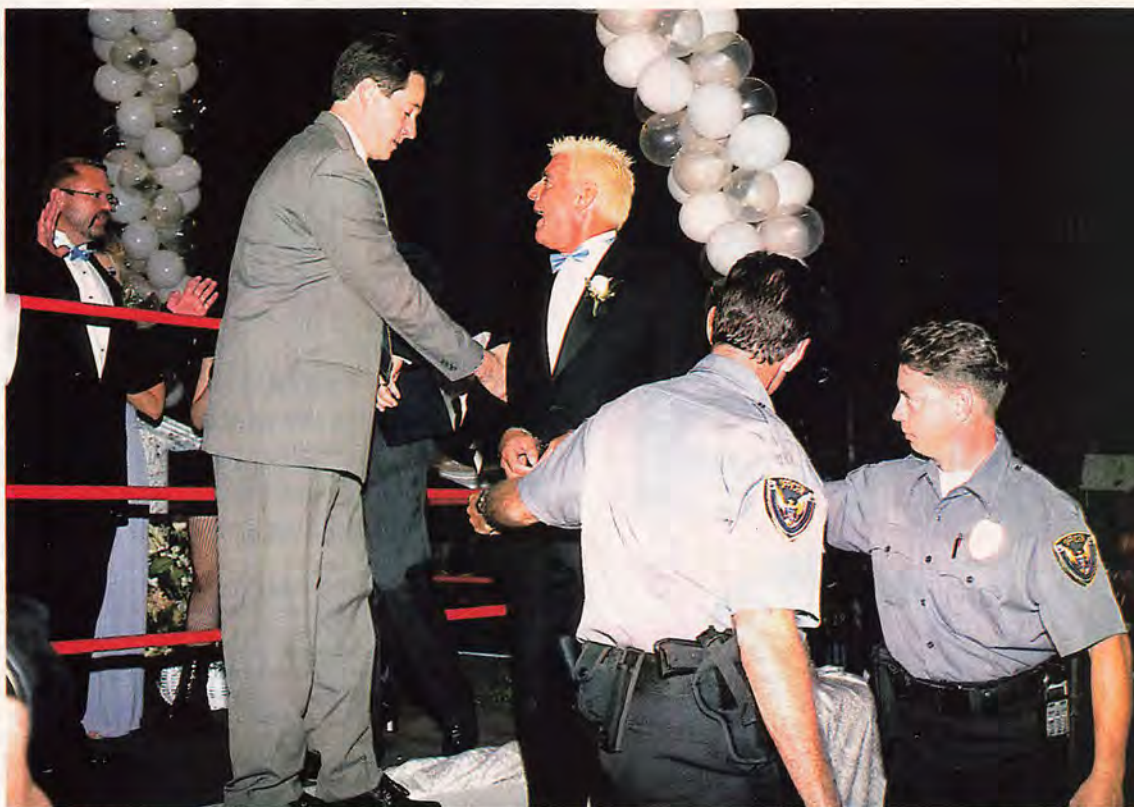
Most Shell-Shocked: Kansas City,

Missouri. In the last two years alone, Kemper Arena faithful have seen wrestling at its worst—the tragic death of Owen Hart—and its best—the 30-minute tribute match to Owen between Bret Hart and Chris Benoit, a modern-day classic.

And finally ...

The Best: New York City. There's a reason wrestlers dream of working the main event at Madison Square Garden: the fans. They can embody just about every trait I've mentioned above. They can be brutal and unforgiving or warm and invigorating. Go to an ECW card at the Arena in South Philly and just take in the shouting matches between the locals and the New Yorkers who make the trek down the New Jersey Turnpike to support their favorite promotion. The same thing happens in Queens and Manhattan. And it happens because Philly fans have plenty to be jealous about.

Coming from a Philly native who hates everything about the "Big Apple," that's the highest praise I can heap on any group of people. □



How disappointed must Charlotte fans have been when Ric Flair was escorted from his son's wedding in handcuffs? The majority of the fans in attendance were probably only there to see Flair in the first place.

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February 1985: AWA World Champion Rick Martel: Five Steps To Greatness. Centerfold: Magnum T.A. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Blanchard-Rhodes, Bob Backlund, Paul Ellering.

April 1985: Jimmy Snuka: "I Want Piper!"—Even If It Kills The Tonga Kid. Centerfold: Ronnie Garvin. Plus: Flair-Rhodes, Terry Gordy, Jim Garvin, Road Warriors.

June 1985: Super Dream Contest: Play Dusty Rhodes' Trivia Game And Win His Boots! Centerfold: Barry Windham. Plus: Flair-Kerry, Fabulous Ones-Road Warriors, Hogan-Volkoff, Magnum T.A.

November 1987: When The Going Gets Tough ... Will Nikita Koloff Turn Bad Again? Centerfold: George Steele. Plus: Road Warriors, Hulk Hogan, Jimmy Hart, Barry Windham.

June 1988: Is The End Near For Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Tully Blanchard. Plus: Midnight Rockers-Kelly & Kiniski, Al Perez, Dusty Rhodes, Magnificent Muraco.

August 1988: Macho Madness—The Torch Is Passed. Centerfold: Al Perez. Plus: Kerry Von Erich, Bruno Sammartino, Luger & Windham, Eddie Gilbert.

November 1988: He's Back! But Is Savage's Belt Beyond Hulk's Reach? Centerfold: Midnight Express. Plus: Madusa-Hyatt, Rock 'n' Rolls, Dusty Rhodes, Warlord & Barbarian-Ax & Smash, Kevin Von Erich & Jessica McClure.

November 1989: Dusty Rhodes—Alone And In Danger. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Luger-Steamboat, Ultimate Warrior, Robert Fuller, Rick Steiner.

January 1990: Warrior's Next Victim: Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Ross, Midnight Express.

February 1990: Luger's Holiday Gift For Flair: Has The "Total Package" Wrapped Up The NWA Title? Centerfold: Bret Hart. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Woman, Hennig-Beefcake, Toni Adams.

May 1990: Hulk Hogan: Primed And Ready For WrestleMania VI. Centerfold: Great Muta. Plus: Piper-Rude, Eric Embry, Rock 'n' Rolls, Sid Vicious, pain.

June 1990: Hogan vs. Warrior: Why WrestleMania VI Won't Settle This Feud. Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Nikita Koloff, Cornette-Rock 'n' Rolls, Rhodes-Savage, Anderson-Sawyer, boxers vs. wrestlers.

July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction

Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

November 1990: Sting Wins The NWA World Title! "If This Is A Dream, Don't Wake Me." Centerfold: Road Warriors. Plus: Rude-Warrior, Ric Flair, Funk-Hansen, muscle and power.

February 1991: WrestleMania VII Contest. Centerfold: 1991 calendar. Plus: Sid Vicious, DiBiase-Rhodes, Scott Steiner, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.

March 1991 (Special Issue): 1990—The Year In Wrestling. 1990 In Review, Achievement '90 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1991.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

November 1991: Your Wedding Gift For Savage & Elizabeth: Help Lift The "Macho Man's" Suspension! Centerfold: Bobby Eaton. Plus: Tito Santana, Bushwhackers, Jushin Liger, Brian Pillman.

January 1992: Ric Flair: He'll Make Hulk Hogan Look Like An Amateur. Centerfold: Ron Simmons. Plus: Rick Steiner, Ultimate Warrior, Lex Luger.

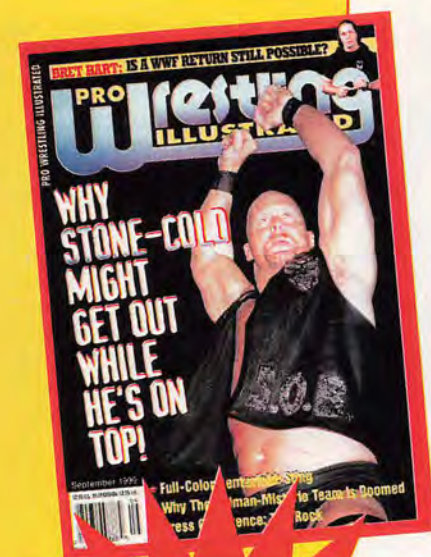
February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psychic For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive PWI Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It



Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

October 1992: The Hatred Still Runs Deep: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage—They'll Settle Up At SummerSlam! Centerfold: Cactus Jack. Plus: Steve Williams, Tom Zenk, WWF title controversy, fire match, Eric Embry.

November 1992: The British Bulldog: Hounding The Hitman. Centerfold: Ultimate Warrior. Plus: Honky Tonk Man, Steiners, Undertaker, Madusa, perfect wrestler.

January 1993: New WWF World Champion Ric Flair: His SummerSlam Plan Works To Perfection. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Ron Simmons, Kerry Von Erich, Rude-Roberts-Steamboat.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons, Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil. Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

Winter 1996 (Special Issue): PWI 500. Centerfold: Shawn Michaels.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus: Kroat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

April 1997: How Winning The Title Saved Psycho Sid's Sanity. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: Rocky Maivia, Jeff Jarrett, Unofficial/Officials, Chris Jericho.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

March 1998 (Special Issue): 1997—The Year In Wrestling. 1997 In Review, Achievement '97 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1998.

April 1998: The DeGeneration X Debate: Will It Save Or Ruin The WWF? Centerfold: Ken Shamrock. Plus: Bret Hart, Undertaker-Kane, Melanie Pillman.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan: Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever! Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

Holiday 1998 (100-Page Special Issue): PWI 500. Eighth Annual Special.

January 1999: No Evil! Can Today's Fans Accept The Warrior's Creed? Centerfold: Chyna. Plus: Sting, Bill Goldberg, Summerslam.

February 1999: The 50 Most Beautiful People In Wrestling! Centerfold: The Nitro Girls.

March 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

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November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Mysterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Mysterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

Holiday 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): PWI 500. Ninth Annual Special.

January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

February 2000: The Master Manipulator! How Stone-Cold Controls The WWF. Centerfold: Kane. Plus: Paul Heyman, Hogan-Bret-Sting-Luger.

March 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): 1999—The Year In Wrestling. 1999 In Review, Achievement '99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2000.

April 2000: The Rock vs. Stone-Cold: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania. Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: DDP, Goldberg-Sid, more Unofficial/Officials.

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July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

August 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstar The WWF Let Slip Away. Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

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PWI'S STATE OF THE GAME ADDRESS

DO YOU DOUBT that wrestling is a phenomenon? Check out the mainstream publications on the newsstands the next time you pick up a copy of *PWI*. Wrestlers frequently adorn the cover of *TV Guide*. While you're there, peruse the tabloids because—whether it's *The National Enquirer*, *The Star*, or *The Globe*—there's bound to be gossip about a wrestling star.

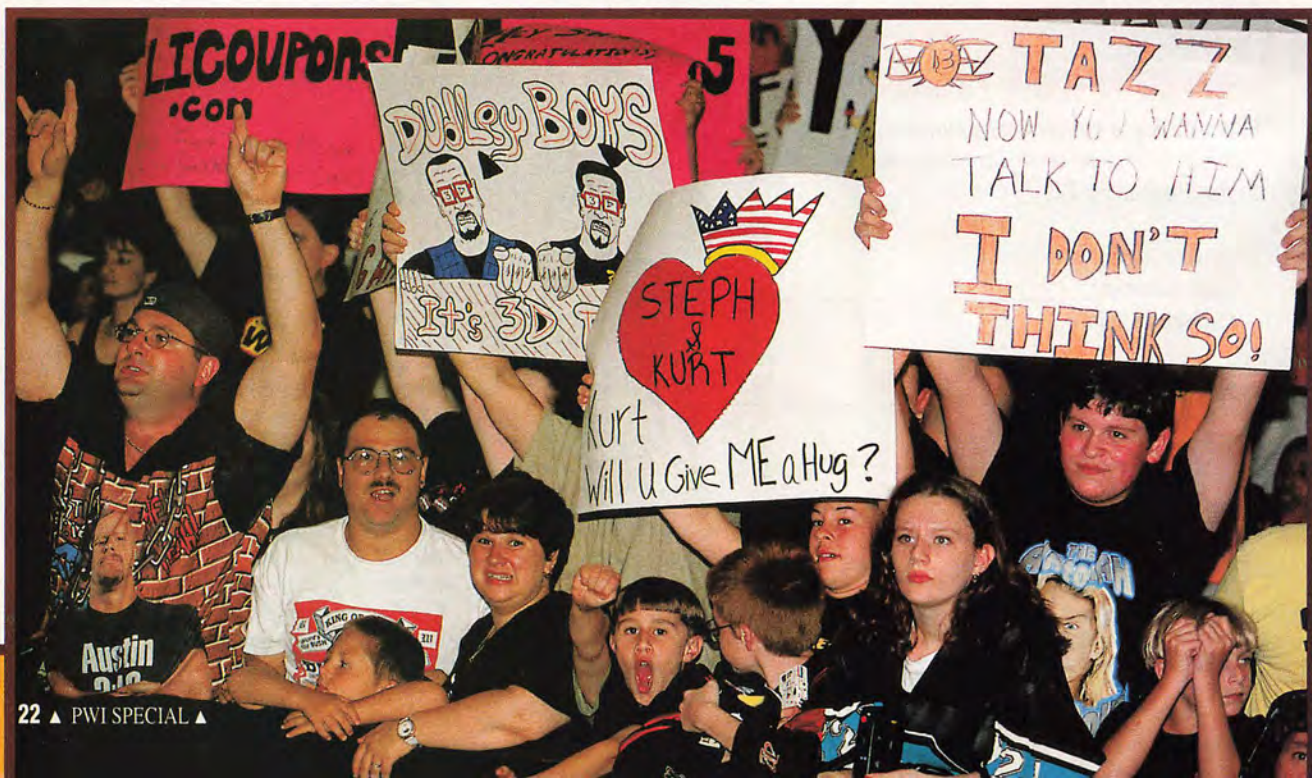
If you prefer sensational pics to sensational headlines, flip through *Playboy* (assuming you're over 18). It just might have a pictorial of your favorite female wrestling celebrity.

And what could be more mainstream than

Here's a good sign that the WWF is doing something right. Check out all the signs at WWF events. Fans aren't just enthralled by the presence of The Rock or Steve Austin. They're captivated by numerous superstars.

Wall Street? When Titan Sports transformed into World Wrestling Federation Entertainment Inc. and placed 20 percent of its company for sale on the Nasdaq National Market, it became a public commodity. One of America's most successful family businesses became the buzz of brokers nationwide. No longer would the McMahons be compared to carnival barkers. They became legit.

The open discussion of the WWF in the public market, along with continuous coverage by the entertainment press, helped remove wrestling's stigma among the general public. People began to appreciate wrestling on its own terms instead of making unfair comparisons to other



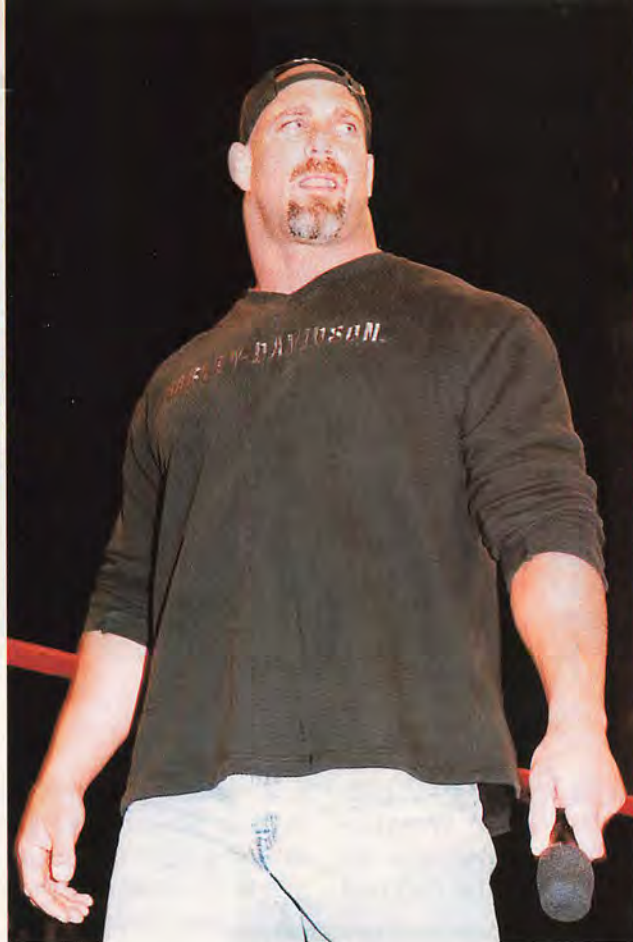
sports such as boxing, hockey, and football. They now "Get It."

Since our last "State Of The Game" analysis three years ago, the sport has changed dramatically. The WWF, with its "Attitude" marketing campaign just underway, was catching up to WCW. The New World Order was the hottest entity in wrestling. ECW was considered a trend-setting indy, not the Big Three force it is today. In our "State Of The Game Address," we boldly surmised that wrestling was approaching a level of mainstream popularity it hadn't experienced since the mid-1980s.

Today, it's a given that wrestling has far surpassed that golden age. WWF and WCW programs are mainstays on cable's list of top 20 programs. The WWF's deal with Viacom will expose wrestling to more viewers than ever via TNN, MTV, UPN, and, possibly, CBS.

Not everything is rosy, however. WCW has undergone three or four changes of leadership (depending on how one defines the regime in power) and it is reported that the company lost \$80-million this fiscal year. That's an unforgivable performance, considering the WWF is now worth more than \$850-million. Time Warner seems anxious to unload its once-lucrative wrestling business. Mandalay Sports, in cooperation with Eric Bischoff, leads in the bidding and could complete a deal by the time you read this.

By the time we put together our next "State Of The Game," WCW could be competing with ECW for the sport's number-two spot. But if either Time Warner or Mandalay restructures the company, the WWF might be



In the past three years in WCW, Bill Goldberg has gone from raw rookie to World champion superstar to jaded veteran. What is the state of his game?

fighting for dominance again.

In this analysis, we examine the vital aspects of the wrestling game. We

cover each of the Big Three federations: the WWF, WCW, and ECW. We explore the business end with our easy-to-understand analysis of the fiscal health of each company—and how the success of each federation is intertwined with the general health of wrestling. Independents are important to the sport's all-around prosperity, too. The health of the indies today can affect the health of the Big Three tomorrow.

We haven't left out the international scene, either. Which promotions are healthy in Mexico? Who are the men who will lead Lucha Libre into the 21st century? We try to make sense of the promotional mess in Japan, too. Can New Japan capitalize on the implosion that threatened to destroy All-Japan? Or will NOAH, Mitsuharu Misawa's new group, claim the Orient's top spot? We provide the analysis.

What about your favorite stars? We scrutinize 10 of the sport's most influential wrestlers. Are they playing it smart, should they reconsider their career strategies, and what are their futures?

So many questions, but fortunately for you, we have most of the answers. We even predict what will happen to the business in years to come in our "State Of The Future" feature.

"The State Of The Game" is more than a snapshot of the current state of wrestling. It's a full-fledged portrait, complete with captions. We hope you'll find it informative and entertaining. □

The McMahon empire is spreading beyond the WWF itself these days, but wrestling is still the lifeblood of the company. Here's the WWF, where everyone is a superstar

THE STATE OF THE WWF

VINCE MCMAHON SAYS his greatest professional moment occurred at WrestleMania III. McMahon said it was like an epiphany as he stood in the center of the ring and

scanned the 93,000 fans in attendance at the Pontiac Silverdome. At that moment, he knew his father would be proud. There must have been plenty of similar moments for Vince Jr. during the past three years.

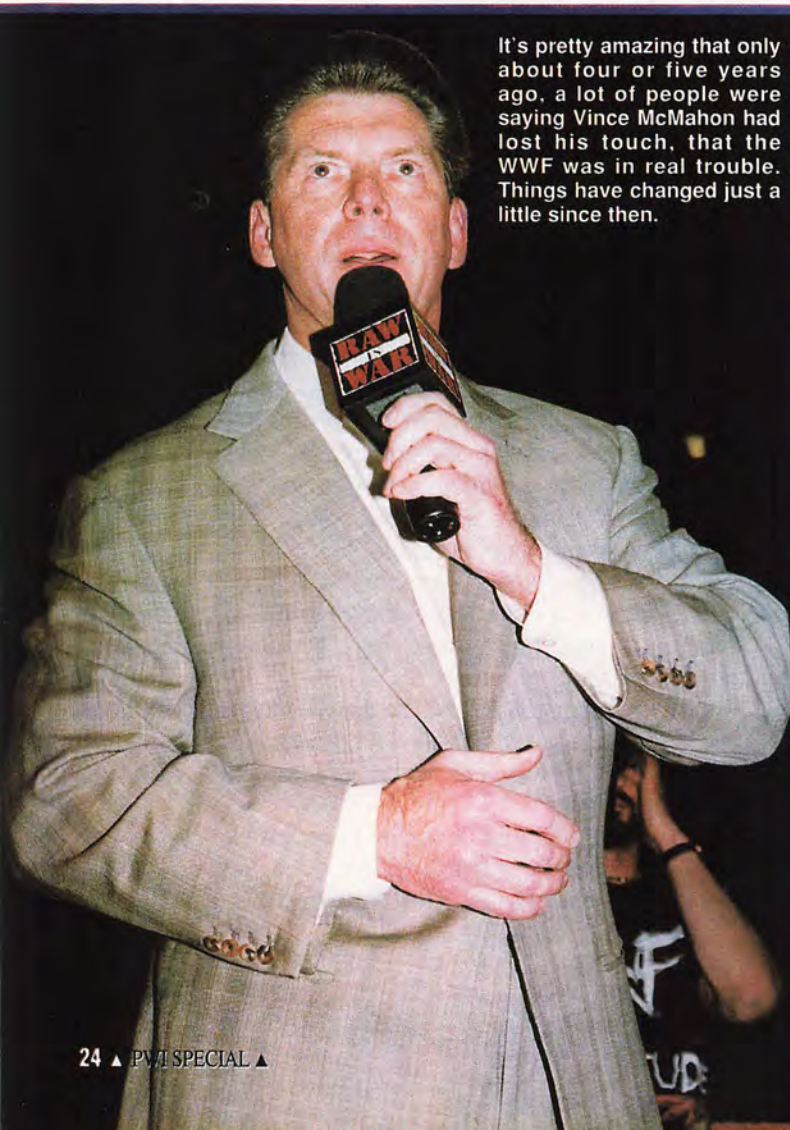
It's pretty amazing that only about four or five years ago, a lot of people were saying Vince McMahon had lost his touch, that the WWF was in real trouble. Things have changed just a little since then.

Was it in April 1998, when his match against WWF champ Steve Austin helped *Raw* gain its first ratings victory over WCW's *Nitro* after years of lagging behind? Was it his heralded steel cage match against Austin at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in February 1999? Was it the grand opening of WWF New York in Times Square? Was it the day his company went public? Was it his announcement of a new football league, the XFL? Was it his programming deal with Viacom?

There have been lots of reasons for McMahon to celebrate, and his father would have been proud at each occasion. In terms of the wrestling business, McMahon guided the WWF into the greatest comeback in the sport's history. In terms of corporate business, Vince and Linda McMahon have been hailed as the couple with the golden touch. With his wife on the cover of *Business Week* and his wrestlers frequently adorning the cover of *TV Guide*, McMahon is enjoying the legitimacy he's always sought.

THE GREAT COMEBACK

Why did Vince McMahon believe he could do it? Against the seemingly unlimited resources of Ted Turner and constant talent





Don't give Steve Austin all the credit for the WWF's amazing comeback, but give him a lot. If he wasn't such a huge star, would Arnold Schwarzenegger have downed a few cold ones with him? Now that "Stone-Cold" is finally back, the WWF could get even stronger.

raids by WCW, the future looked bleak. But the WWF owner had confidence—and McMahon knew he had a little time. He had confidence in his own abilities and the new "Attitude" marketing strategy he had approved. McMahon knew he could groom new superstars, but it would take time to build them.

When we last examined the state of the WWF almost three years ago, a young upstart named Rocky Maivia was taking orders from Faarooq in a group called The Nation of Domination. Hunter Hearst Helmsley was a sidekick to WWF champ Shawn Michaels. Brian Christopher and Scott Taylor, later known as Too Cool, were battling each other in the fledgling light heavyweight division. No one assumed The Rock, Triple-H, Grandmaster Sexay, and Scotty Too Hotty would be among the hottest stars in the business. And who would have guessed fans would be clamoring to see The Sultan's posterior? Rikishi's come a long way, baby!

McMahon had a great support team. He had assembled an elite group of marketing consultants and public relations experts that made the WWF run

like a machine. There was a young writer named Vince Russo who whispered the words "Internet," "attitude," and "young male demographic" in his ear. Combine those ingredients with the business acumen of his wife, Linda, and the

As Austin dominated and carried the WWF for several years, Triple-H and The Rock had time to develop into megastars themselves. Their rivalry has been one of the best in recent WWF history.





Looking for new superstars? The WWF has plenty of them. Chris Benoit is already a bona fide main-eventer, while Tazz is showing he can be more than a cold, calculating suplex machine.

enthusiasm of his children, Shane and Stephanie, and in hindsight, it's rather easy to comprehend Vince's recipe for success.

Oh, there are two other words that can do a lot to sum up the WWF's success: Steve and Austin.

More than any other person, Austin is responsible for the huge upsurge in television ratings, pay-per-view buy rates, and ticket and merchandising

star. Austin was the WWF. And Austin vs. McMahon was the talk of the wrestling world. Austin launched the WWF to such great heights (and gave other WWF superstars time to develop), in fact, that the company survived without him for 10 months this year. He also helped create a star whose presence allowed the WWF to thrive in his absence: The Rock.

CROWDED AT THE TOP

Who deserves to be in the WWF's top tier? Almost everyone is the answer. Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, and Michael Cole are so effective at get-

Stephanie and Shane McMahon (shown with Triple-H) are very entertaining in their roles on WWF TV, but they're also willing to work hard behind the scenes to make sure the company succeeds.

ting wrestlers over, the public relations hype machine is so efficient, and each superstar is so talented and willing to work hard that

it's hard to leave anyone out.

The Rock is the WWF's hottest mainstream celebrity right now, following his appearances at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions



Kurt Angle is already a huge WWF star, and he's only going to get better. WWF fans just love to see him get his butt kicked.

this year. Triple-H belongs in the top tier. His past dominance as WWF champ and his number-one ranking in the 2000 "PWI 500"

make him the top wrestler in the business, and he's been touted as the WWF's MVP in this magazine and elsewhere. The Undertaker made himself a permanent presence when he beat Hulk Hogan for the WWF title way back in 1991. The Undertaker has more WrestleMania victories than anyone in history, including Hogan.

What about Kane? A former WWF champ in his own right, his past victories over Austin and The Undertaker make him a headliner. World tag team champions Edge and Christian should be there, too. Christian, after all, has a tainted pinfall win over The Rock, and Edge—by virtue of his appearance in the latest *Highlander* movie—is a bankable star who hasn't come close to reaching his peak yet. The Dudley Boyz, The Hardy Boyz, and The Acolytes are as popular as a lot of singles superstars. They can be main-event material, too.

A fresh crop of main-eventers were groomed this summer. Fully Loaded's triple main event in July elevated Chris Benoit,



Chris Jericho, and Kurt Angle. All three men lost their respective matches, but all three are viewed as legitimate main-eventers. Who will forget Benoit's near-defeat of The Rock for the WWF title at Fully Loaded? Or Jericho's near-defeat of

Being a WWF mid-carder isn't such a bad thing. Eddie Guerrero and Val Venis both fit into that category, and both get a lot of exposure on WWF TV.





Has the WWF ever had a stronger tag team roster? Battles between the Dudleys and Edge and Christian (above) are always exciting. And The Hardy Boyz (with Lita, suplexing Trish Stratus and Test, below) are just so daring and innovative.



Triple-H for the WWF title on *Raw*? Undertaker may have defeated Angle decisively at Fully Loaded, but Angle's controversial friendship with Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley and his rivalry with Triple-H have made him a bona fide headliner. It's true.

Then there's the WWF newest female sensation, the lovely Lita. She looks great and can wrestle.

MID-CARD SUPERSTARS

Only in the WWF would a lot of mid-card wrestlers receive ovations almost as loud as bona fide main-eventers. That makes their jobs much tougher. Mid-carders must maintain the same energy level and remain just as entertaining as their megastar counterparts—without the benefit of victories over major WWF names.

Case in point: Eddie Guerrero. Being the Intercontinental champion, he could be considered the king of the mid-carders. Those competitors frozen out of the World title race are chasing his belt. Guerrero's own obsession with the Intercontinental title will likely lead to a split with his "*Mamacita*," Chyna. Despite the challenges, Guer-



When Vince McMahon called a press conference to announce the formation of the XFL, a lot of people laughed. As the months have passed, however, more and more experts are at least giving the league a shot at succeeding.

Guerrero says mid-card status in the WWF is better than any kind of status anywhere else.

"There's no such thing as that really," said Guerrero. "Once you make it to the WWF, you're in the major leagues. You're a superstar. The WWF is the main event. The WWF is more like a team than a league. If a baseball team wins the World Series, everyone on that team is a world champion. The WWF is the world champion of wrestling, and I'm an important part of that team. Having the Intercontinental belt is just a little more salsa on the burrito."

Guerrero has a point, but that's no solace to Perry Saturn, X-Pac, Road Dogg, Val Venis, The Goodfather, T & A, Bull Buchanan, and Kaien Tai, all of whom appear to be struggling. Guerrero suggests that a lot of the wrestlers at the bottom of the WWF would be in the top tier anywhere else. Take Big Bossman, for example. If he jumped to WCW tomorrow, he'd probably be an immediate contender for the U.S. belt. He's considered filler in the WWF. He's talented, reliable, and, at times, entertaining filler—but filler nonetheless. The mid-carders' inability

to keep pace with The Rock, Triple-H, and others gives the perception they're second-rate stars.

That also proves how far the European title has sunk. Forget that the European championship is rarely defended in Europe. In terms of prestige, it's less valuable in the WWF than the cruiserweight title is in WCW or the TV title is in ECW. It's time for the WWF to put some effort into the European belt or give it to somebody in Europe.

MORE THAN WRESTLING?

When Vince McMahon coined the phrase "sports entertainment," it was a marketing ploy to make people think he was in the mainstream entertainment business rather than the rasslin' business. Whether he liked it or not, McMahon was little more than a wrestling promoter.

Now, as the WWF becomes better known as WWE in the corporate world, McMahon's claim to be in the entertainment business rings true. McMahon's domain stretches beyond wrestling and into football, merchandising, and restaurants. Before long, WWE might very well expand into television action-adventure series, big budget movies, and record labels. McMahon is right. It's not just rasslin' anymore. □

WCW has lost a record amount of money while the WWF is doing booming business. Desperate times call for drastic measures. Enter Vince Russo

THE STATE OF WCW

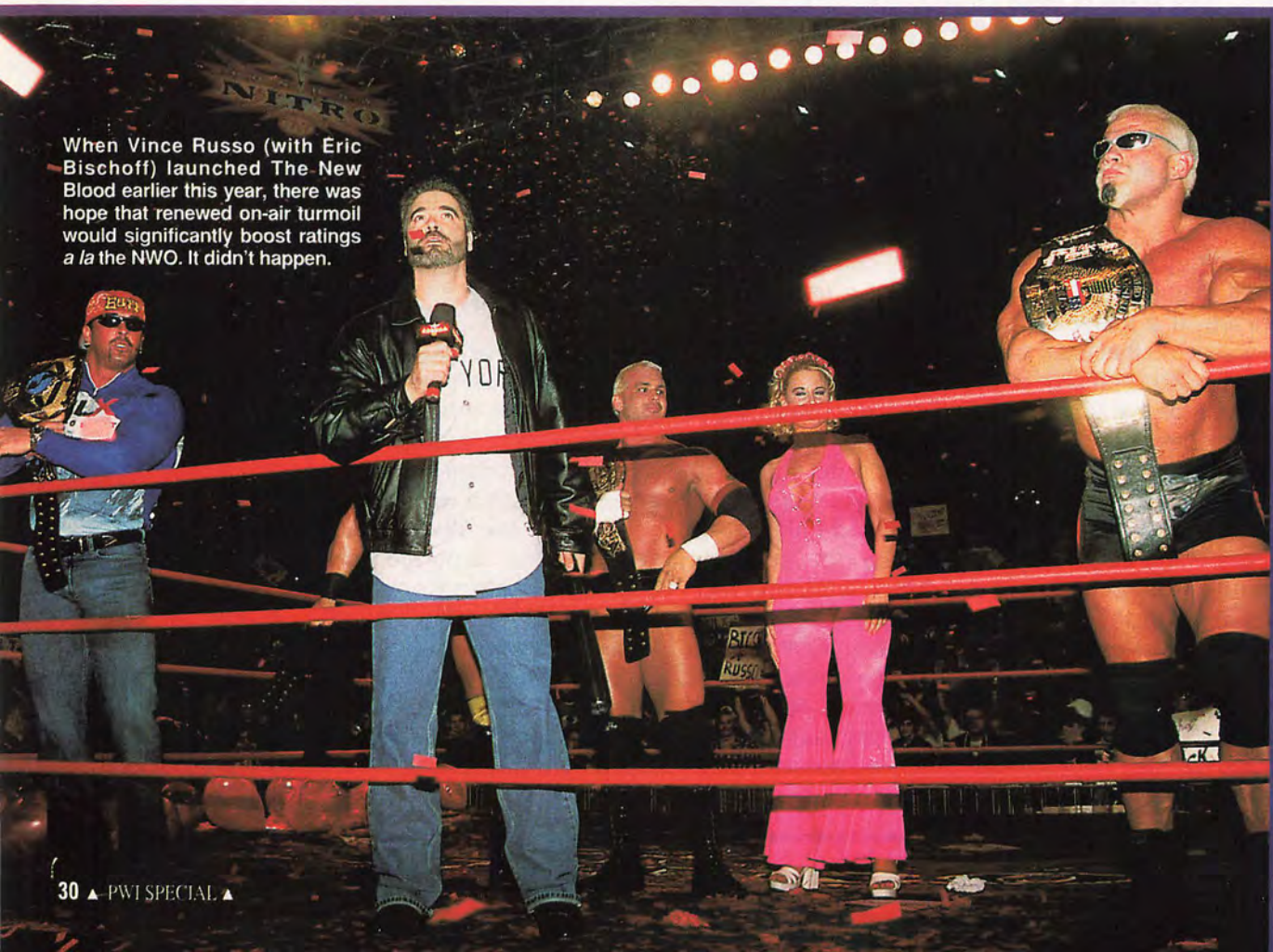
"TURMOIL GENERATES INTEREST..."

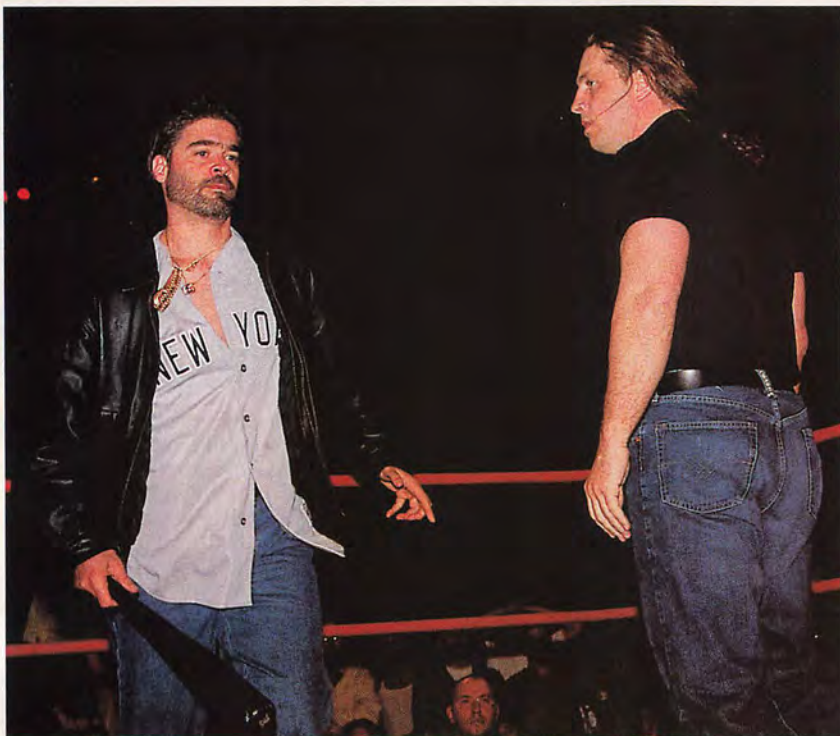
Those three words began our analysis of the state of WCW almost three years ago. Back then, the company's turmoil was caused by the New World Order. In that same analysis, we

explained how WCW's "enemy within" helped make it the number-one federation in North America.

After two years of infighting, political maneuverings, and numerous changes in leadership, WCW proved us wrong. Turmoil does not necessarily generate interest. The Monday night ratings from

When Vince Russo (with Eric Bischoff) launched The New Blood earlier this year, there was hope that renewed on-air turmoil would significantly boost ratings *a la* the NWO. It didn't happen.





Through no fault of Vince Russo, Bret Hart was misused by WCW from the very minute he debuted in the promotion. Russo, however, hasn't done a whole lot to correct Hart's situation since taking over WCW's creative reigns.

the past two years prove that turmoil can motivate viewers to switch over to the competition—and leave one of Ted Turner's enterprises almost \$80-million in debt.

THE FALL OF WCW

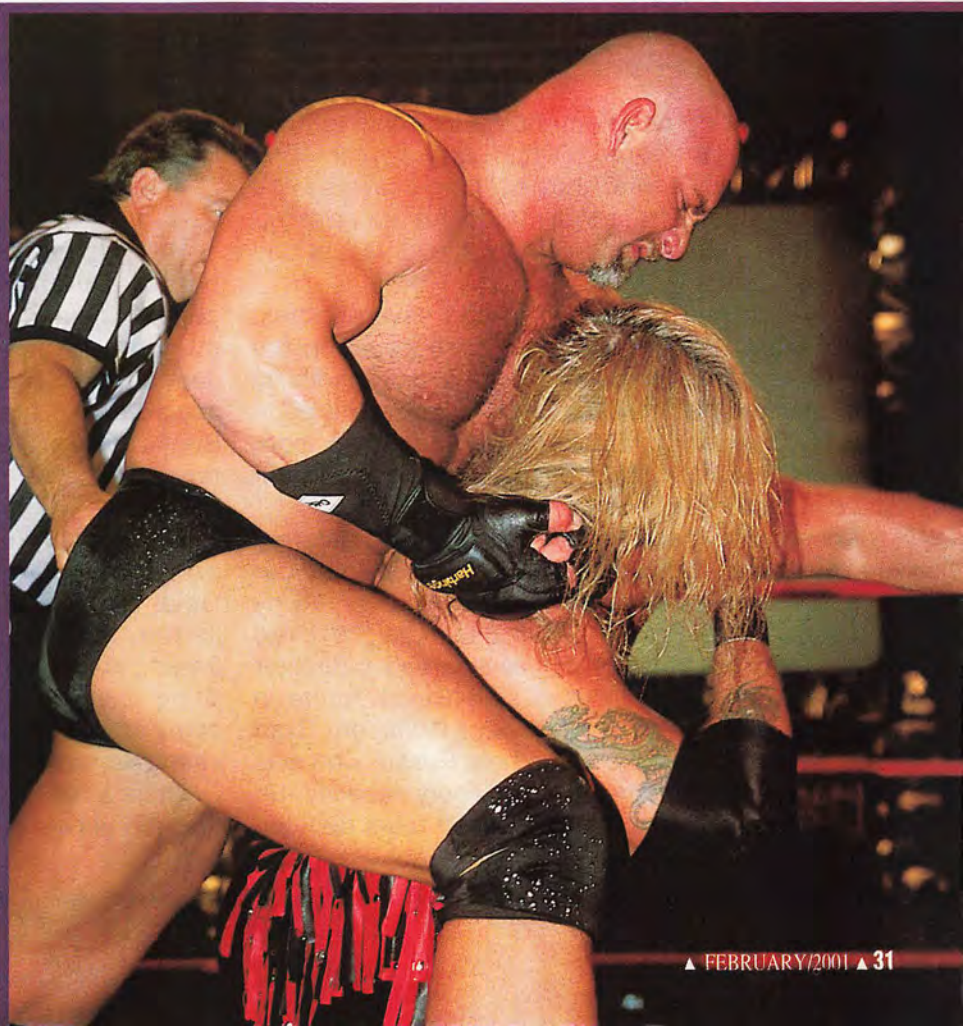
The company's decline began with the acquisition of Bret Hart. This isn't to say that hiring the five-time WWF champ was a bad decision, but WCW's mis-handling of Hart's career deserves to be remembered as the worst misuse of wrestling talent in modern times.

It started cleverly enough. The night after the Survivor Series '97 fiasco, Eric Bischoff and members of the NWO waved Canadian flags, taunting Vince McMahon and the WWF. When Hart appeared at Starrcade a few weeks later, he knocked out Bischoff and helped Sting gain a

Though Bill Goldberg was feuding with Kevin Nash for most of the last year, we weren't sure why. Goldberg was such an enigma this year, nobody really knew with whom he was siding on any given day.

cheap victory over Hollywood Hogan for the WCW title.

That was the big mistake. The Hogan-Sting contest didn't go the way fans expected. After 15 months of rafter-lurking, Sting was expected to pin Hogan cleanly. It didn't happen. Even worse, Hogan appeared to score a fair three-





Jeff Jarrett and Booker T were two middle-of-the-road wrestlers who saw their careers take off when Vince Russo ridded WCW of many past-their-prime veterans.

count over Sting earlier in the match, only to have Hart—a special referee for the Larry Zbyszko-Eric Bischoff match earlier that evening—reverse the decision and restart the match for no reason. WCW later declared the championship vacant due to the controversy.

Hart switched from good to bad several times, as did most other WCW stars. These were only the first of countless times when WCW lost credibility and insulted the intelligence of its fans. The addition of *Thunder* in January 1998 added two more hours of television to produce. Adding a third hour of *Nitro* didn't help, either.

Then came the series of new regimes, different bookers, and committee shakeups. In September 1999, WCW President Bischoff was replaced by Executive Vice President Bill Busch. WCW hired WWF TV writer Vince Russo as its creative director the following month. Busch sent Russo home in early-2000. Turner Entertainment President Brad Siegel later asked Bischoff to help Russo, who was on hiatus until that time, in an advisory capacity. So Busch resigned. The Russo-Bischoff team debuted

Russo product. Is Russo the answer? We don't know yet.

THE NEW TOP TIER

Hulk Hogan, Sid Vicious, Randy Savage, Curt Hennig, Dallas Page, and Roddy Piper are all but gone. Sting and Kevin Nash remain, but they share the top echelon with Booker T, Bill Goldberg, Jeff Jarrett, and Scott Steiner. Any of those six men is capable of winning the title on a given night. Booker T was the champ at press time, having regained the belt from Nash in a decisive victory at Fall Brawl.

Will Booker keep the strap for long? The odds are against anyone doing that. Steiner beat Goldberg at Fall Brawl and is targeting Booker. Jarrett, the man Booker defeated at Bash at the Beach, is looking for another WCW title. Nash and Sting have both held the title several times and come up with victories whenever it seems their championship wells are dry.

There's also the group of established stars who, due to injuries or disputes with Russo, aren't full-

Kwee-Wee (wrestling against Lt. Loco) might not have gotten the chance to break into WCW's ranks only a few years ago. As it stands right now, however, he's a regular on both *Nitro* and *Thunder*.

time wrestlers but round out the supporting cast. Bret Hart, still recovering from a concussion caused by Goldberg at Starrcade '99, resumed that feud by attacking "Da Man" in the New Mexico desert. He's complaining about the entire business again, however. Ric Flair, who lost his job and his hair to Russo last summer, is out for revenge against his nemesis. But what if Ric is the father of Stacy Keibler's baby? If that's the case, David might pull his father into the fray to try to get a piece of him a second (or would it be a third?) time.

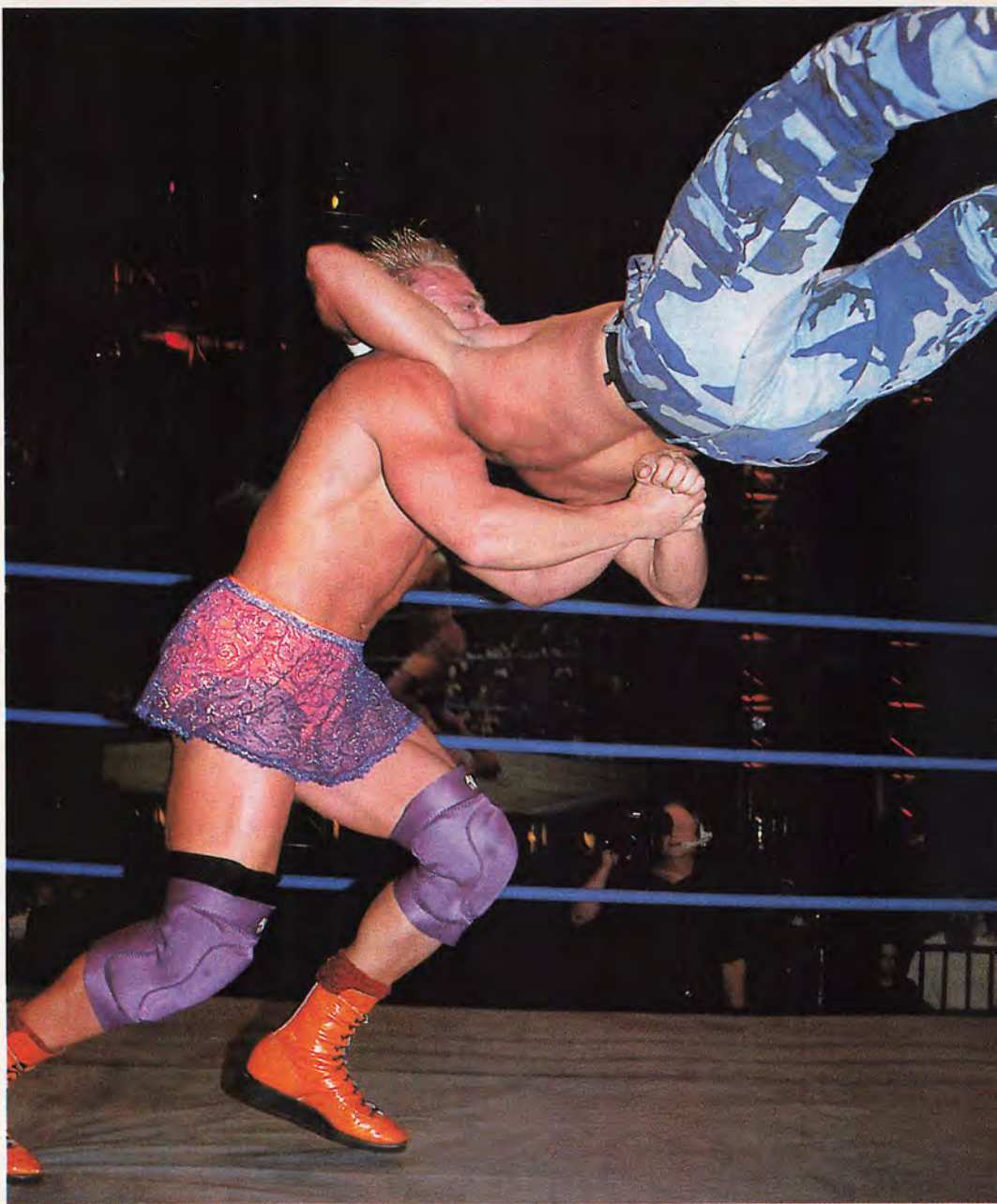
Unless fans were keeping charts during the first eight months of 2000, it was almost impossible to figure out who was on whose side in WCW. With whom did Kevin Nash align himself? Was Scott Steiner a rulebreaker or fan favorite? Was Goldberg part of The New Blood? It became too confusing for people to care at times.

Finally, alliances are clearer—and the battle lines are looking like the ones that were drawn in January 2000. Russo's clique, formerly known as NWO 2000, consists of Nash, Jarrett, and Steiner. Hart was in that mix until he made derogatory

comments about WCW and the business in general in his weekly *Calgary Sun* column in September. Since then, he's been absent from WCW TV. Russo's opposition includes Booker, Goldberg, and Sting. And, finally, the WCW championship is the focal point of the war.

NEW BLOOD RISING

The true "New Blood" isn't in the top tier as of yet. The real future of WCW is in the mid-card ranks or among its homegrown rookies. Those wrestlers on the verge of main event status include U.S. champion Lance Storm, Shane Douglas, Mike Awesome, and The Filthy Animals. However, it is





WCW's title situation is pretty bleak. Even though Kronic has looked dominant (left), fans don't care much about them—World tag champs or not. The additions of both Crowbar and Shane Douglas to the U.S. title scene would certainly liven that division up (bottom left).

wrestlers such as Billy Kidman, Kronic, Vampiro, Big Vito, David Flair, Three Count, and The Natural Born Thrillers who have benefited most from the Russo regime. These men, some of whom were considered only moderate talents, have received a surprising amount of air time and are starting to develop into stars.

"I've never seen so much excitement among the young wrestlers in WCW," said Stevie Ray, who has been in WCW for six years. "I remember that excitement when I first arrived, and Booker and me got the opportunity to become 10-time World tag team champions. Then, somehow, this company got stuck in a rut, and our young guys became demoralized. I'm glad to see things are changing, whether that fruit booty Russo is responsible for it or not."

There are still problems confronting WCW's young wrestlers. There are few goals worth aspiring for in the mid-card ranks. Too many of WCW's mid-carders are wandering aimlessly from one silly gimmick or short-lived storyline to another. It's time to bring back the competitive aspect of wrestling, namely its championships.

The devaluation of the U.S. championship has adversely affected the mid-card. Lance Storm is too busy using it as a prop for his Canadian propaganda to defend it on a regular basis against worthy challengers. Singles wrestlers are aiming straight for the World title—only to compete for it in tag team or four-way matches, or get lost in the shuffle altogether.

Now that WCW has abandoned the TV title, it should at least promote the U.S. championship—especially with



In today's wrestling arena, superior technical skills only get you so far. No matter how good a wrestler you are, if you can't draw ratings, you might as well kiss your chances of main-eventing goodbye. WCW is putting a lot of faith in Booker T.

the hardcore title all but abandoned, too. Kronik's domination of the tag team division has gone relatively unappreciated, as have the slew of recent World tag team champions. Where's a good Rock 'n' Roll Express-Midnight Express rivalry when you need it?

WCW was headed in the right direction when it set up a tournament to determine a challenger for cruiserweight champion Elix Skipper. The same should be done for the U.S. and tag team titles.

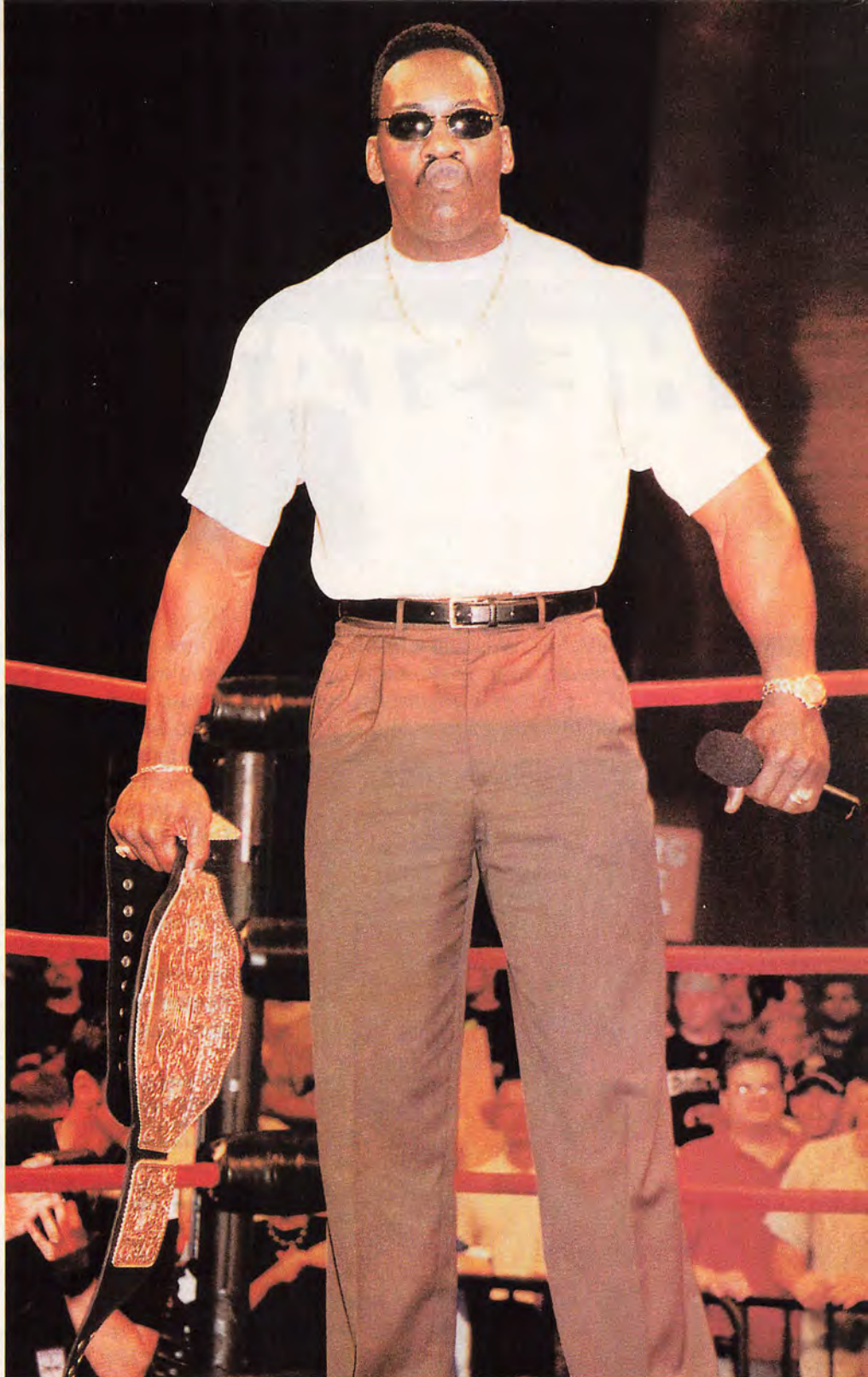
"IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RATINGS"

Vince Russo's infamous quote from his Powers-That-Be days still rings true. Since Russo's lips gave birth to that mantra, it's surprising he hasn't been more effective in closing the gap between WCW and the WWF. Russo's WCW has been plagued by too many turns, too many swerves, and too many title changes. Better pacing and more character development are necessary.

On September 11, the fourth quarter-hour of *Nitro*—which airs just before *Raw*—achieved a 4.1 rating, its highest score since April. The show featured the attempted David Flair-Stacy Keibler wed-

ding, which was attended by Ric Flair. Whether that was an example of another Flair hotshot, or if it represents something more significant, remains to be seen.

Do fans enjoy Russo's male soap operas? Are they getting tired of the WWF? Whichever is the case, Russo will need all his creative wits to make WCW a strong challenger to the WWF again. □



Just over a year ago, ECW experienced its greatest success by landing a national cable deal with TNN. Now Paul Heyman is trying to figure out where his rebellious promotion goes from here

THE STATE OF ECW

THE FACT THAT ECW is still surviving after a tumultuous seven-year existence is only half the story. The other half is that despite severe debt that had threatened to bankrupt it, ECW

is now a member of the Big Three. Though the company was hardly in great financial shape as summer turned to fall this year, the renegade promotion could be proud that it made a successful transition from bingo halls and high school gyms to cavernous ballrooms and the occasional major arena.

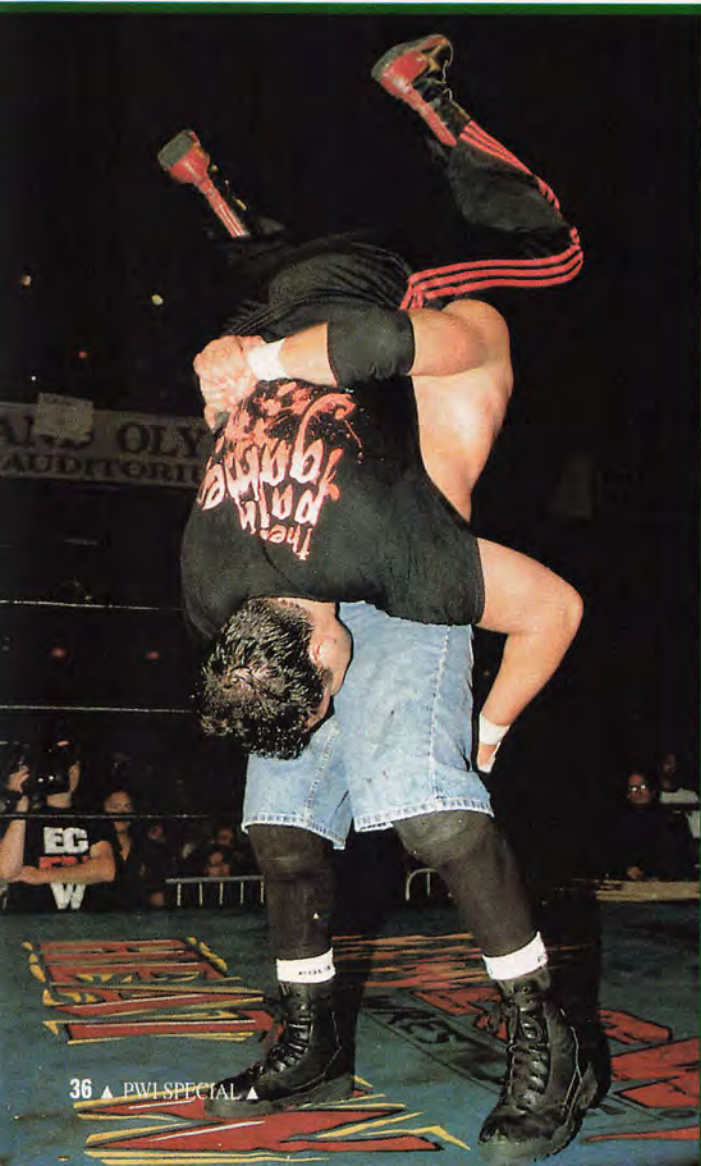
ECW began on Friday and Saturday nights in Philadelphia, then added a few more dates per month throughout the Northeast. Now ECW makes regular stops in the Midwest, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Florida, and has even crossed the border into Canada. And ECW's HeatWave 2000 pay-per-view, held in Los Angeles, helped to eradicate its image as a regional promotion. That's quite an achievement when you consid-

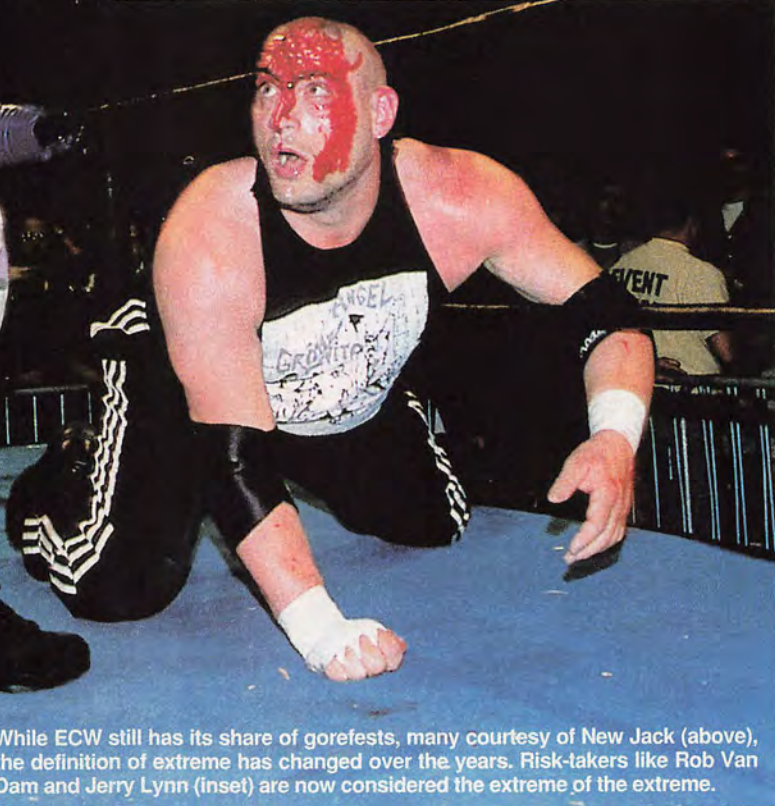
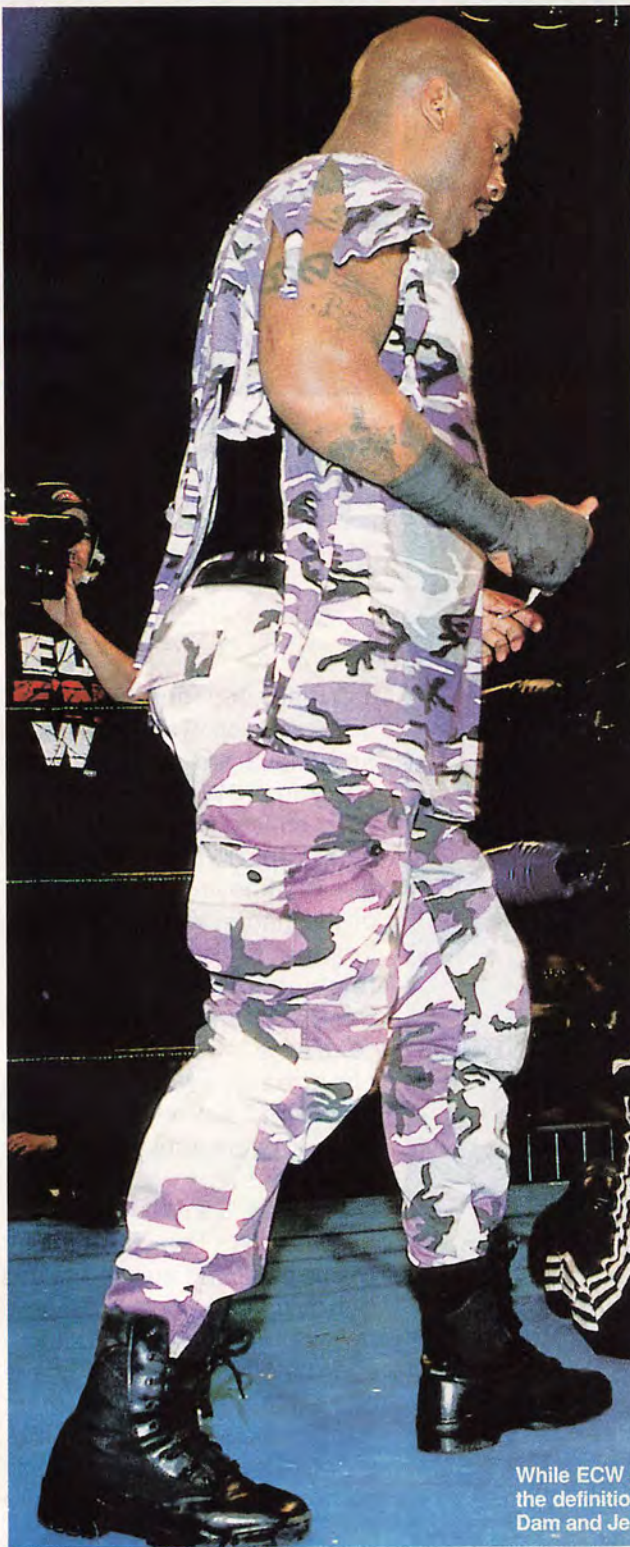
er it took the WWF more than 20 years to become a national federation.

The spread of ECW's hardcore revolution into the WWF and WCW is well-doc-

umented, although not well-duplicated. ECW has plenty of imitators in the minor leagues, too, with Xtreme Pro Wrestling being the most prominent. And just like ECW made a name for itself by railing against everything WWF and WCW, XPW is railing against ECW, trying to get attention while it barks at a bigger dog. But it remains to be seen whether XPW will emerge as a major contender or just another also-ran with a large bankroll (we're betting on the latter). Today, the name "ECW" garners respect worldwide—and it was a long, hard climb to get there.

ECW debuted in California in July with its HeatWave 2000 pay-per-view. In the main event, Justin Credible defeated Tommy Dreamer to retain his World heavyweight title. Just recently, ECW made its Canadian debut.





While ECW still has its share of gorefests, many courtesy of New Jack (above), the definition of extreme has changed over the years. Risk-takers like Rob Van Dam and Jerry Lynn (inset) are now considered the extreme of the extreme.

REVOLUTION OR EVOLUTION?

ECW's hardcore revolution changed wrestling forever. Its adult themes and its use of tables, ladders, and chairs heavily influenced the WWF. ECW itself had been influenced by the hardcore revolution

already underway in Japan and the grisly specialty matches sanctioned by the IWA, FMW, and other promotions throughout the Orient.

Not only did the WWF and WCW relax their rules and give their winking approval to the use of weapons in the ring, but both federations also established their



Lance Storm (pictured with the lovely Dawn Marie) was yet another ECW star who decided to pack his bags and head elsewhere. ECW, however, continues to defy the odds by replenishing its roster with impressive hungry wrestlers.

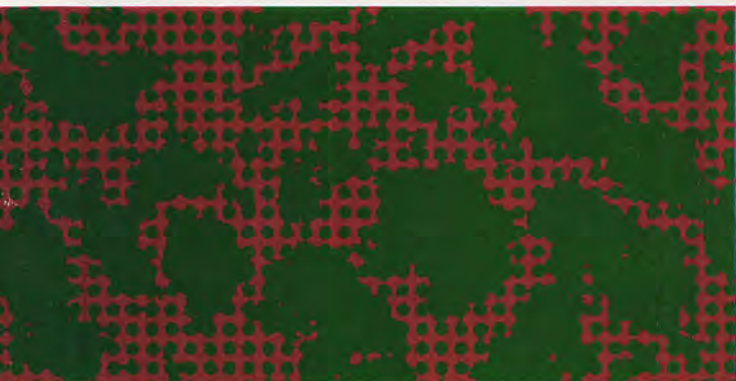
What happened was a natural evolution. Tables, ladders, and chairs are still part of the show in ECW. So are Singapore canes, staple guns, and timekeepers' bells. But ECW, already known for having one of the hardest-working rosters in the business, turned it up a few notches. ECW went extreme. At one time, the term "extreme" was used interchangeably with the term "hardcore," but now it can also refer to work ethic and daredevil stunts.

Rob Van Dam represents the new ECW. The former TV champ combines martial arts and high-flying tactics into a dynamic offense. He also satisfies hardcore fans by integrating chairs and tables into his repertoire. The Van Daminator, a move consisting of kicking a steel chair into someone's face, is a prime example. The Van Terminator, RVD's latest mind-blowing

own hardcore divisions. Their watered-down versions of hardcore almost gave the genre a bad name, however. Hardcore had become so predictable that ECW had to distinguish itself from the Big Two again—and, ironically, the trend ECW itself had started in North America.

maneuver, is even more brutal because it's executed when an opponent is trapped against the turnbuckles.

ECW World champion Justin Credible, Kid Kash, Jerry Lynn, Mikey Whipwreck, and Yoshihiro Tajiri all employ this style. Executing moonsaults from the security railing and into the crowd are now as



With such a large turnover of talent in ECW, Simon Diamond, a talented wrestler who has yet to break out of the mid-card, could easily develop into one of ECW's main attractions in a year or two.

common as chair shots. But there's always the temptation to go too far. New Jack's dives from the balcony are life-threatening and shouldn't be attempted. Too many times, ECW wrestlers execute risky moves that have nothing to do with offense. They're merely stunts. Quality wrestling ought to be enough.

ECW'S REVOLVING DOOR

Each federation has a philosophy behind its booking and storytelling. Vince McMahon claims to produce two action-adventure movies per week. Vince Russo claims to produce male soap operas. What's Paul Heyman's philosophy? Fill in the gaps!

While ECW is an undisputed member of the Big Three, there's another harsher reality. ECW always seems to be at the mercy of the WWF and WCW. Heyman works hard to groom new stars to headline the promotion and become World champion, then must watch as they're plucked by the other two federations. Shane Douglas, Raven, Tazz, and Mike Awesome are just a few. While never the ECW World champ, Lance Storm and The Dudley Boyz were also valuable contributors to ECW at the time of their jumps to WCW and the WWF, respectively. How much longer will it take for either the WWF or WCW to recruit Justin Credible, Rhino, or Rob Van Dam?

When ECW secured a national cable contract with The Nashville Network and concluded its deal with Acclaim last year, Heyman was finally in a position to offer long-term contracts to most of his wrestlers. For the coming year, there's a decent chance the departures will be kept to a minimum.

Heyman has always claimed that a departing star



simply leaves room for another up-and-comer. While that sounds as if he's putting a positive spin on a very negative situation, the fact that ECW has remained strong after each departure lends credence to his assertion. Justin Credible, Kid Kash, Rhino, and Steve Corino were mid-carders not long ago. Tony Mamaluke and Little Guido have gone from opening matches to being World tag team champions. Mid-carders such as Simon Diamond, Johnny Swinger, and Scotty Anton should get the chance to be main-eventers within a year. Who knows, Roadkill, C.W. Anderson, or Bilvis Wesley could be World champion.

That's not a joke.

WRESTLING'S "HARD WORK" LOCKER ROOM

What distinguishes ECW programs from those of the WWF and WCW, other than the poor lighting and sometimes haphazard camera work? It's *wrestling*, of course. It's amazing that at a time when wrestling is doing unprecedented business, the WWF and WCW won't even admit that's what they're producing. Jim Ross talks about "WWF superstars" instead of wrestlers on *Raw*. Tony Schiavone talks about "sports entertainment"



Rhino (above, dragging around The Sandman) and Steve Corino (below, peppering Jerry Lynn with jabs) are two examples of ECW's hard-working locker room. Both men give their all (and sometimes their blood) whenever they're in the ring.



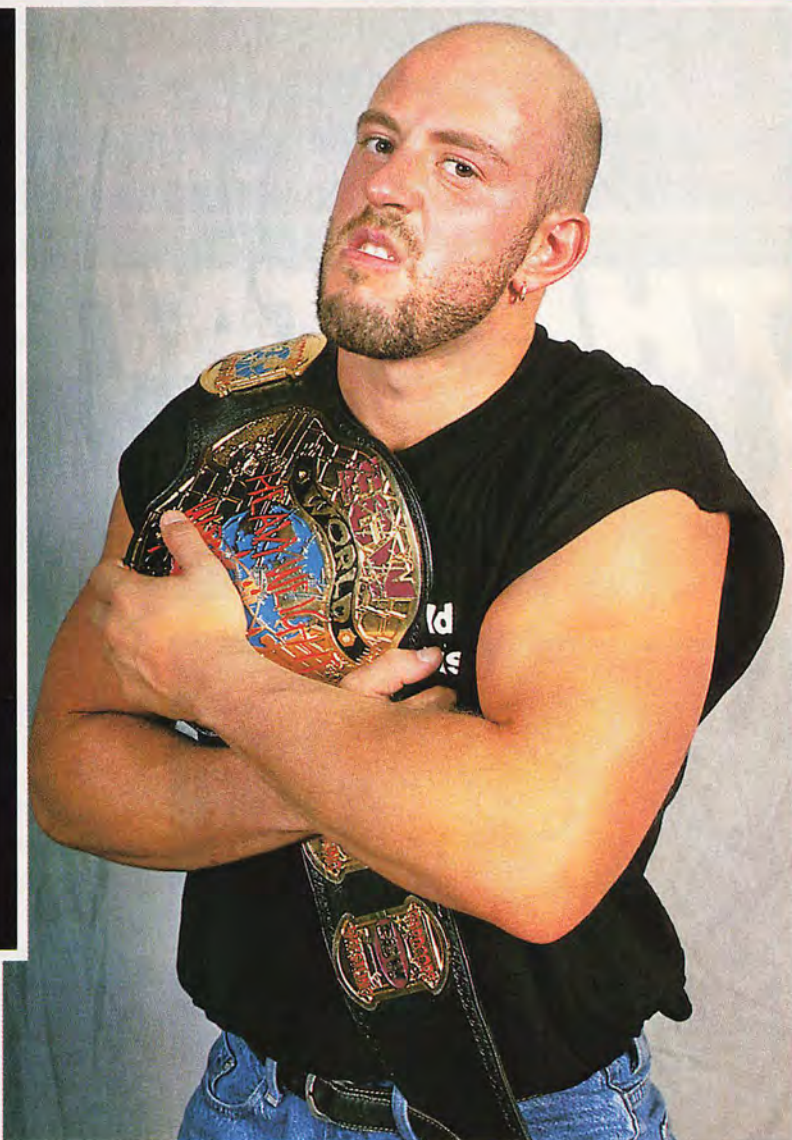
instead of wrestling. Believe it or not, Joey Styles talks about "wrestling"—and doesn't act as if he's being pricked by a needle every time the word slips out.

ECW On TNN was often criticized for being too light on interviews and storylines and for not giving wrestlers the opportunity to flesh out their characters on television. Those are valid criticisms. But in an era in which other wrestling programs are long on talk and short on substance, ECW is a refreshing alternative. It's not unusual at all for matches on ECW TV to extend past the five-minute mark, and that's more than can be said for most WWF and WCW TV shows. With more financial backing and improved production quality, ECW's roster is capable of producing two hours of quality television on any national cable network. ECW live from the Hammerstein Ballroom in Manhattan isn't hard to imagine.

For many wrestlers, ECW's work ethic is a major source of satisfaction. "I may not earn as much money as those guys on *Raw* or *Nitro*, but I sure as hell wrestle a lot harder and have a lot more pride," said Steve Corino. "I've been bleedin' buckets in ECW for almost a year, and I'm not bitter about it. People see me bleeding like a pig, and they appreciate what I do. I'm not



For the moment, ECW owner Paul Heyman (above) is depending on his ECW World champ, Justin Credible (right), to be the company's stand-out star. So far, Credible has made Paul E. proud.



just another performer. I'm not just another four-minute slot on the show. Nothing beats the atmosphere at an ECW card and that adrenaline rush you get."

WHERE, OH WHERE, WILL ECW GO?

The last *ECW On TNN* program was originally set to air on September 22, only three days before the first edition of *Raw* aired on the same network. But thanks to a stay of execution by the magnanimous Vince McMahon, ECW was given the chance to remain on TNN until signing a new deal with another cable network or until the end of the year, whichever came first.

ECW's relationship with TNN started out as a pleasant partnership, but it soured not long after. TNN refused to put advertising and marketing dollars behind ECW, prompting ECW blow-by-blow man Joey Styles to ridicule TNN as being the "Hee Haw

Channel" or the network on "four wheels."

Rumors continue to circulate as to where ECW will wind up. USA Networks, in an effort to replace WWF programming, might offer ECW an 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. time slot on Saturday nights. If that's successful, it could be moved to Monday nights. Fox's FX channel also appears to be in the running. Nevertheless, a year of weekly national exposure was invaluable. ECW produces six pay-per-views each year and added a seventh right before this issue went to press. And Heyman is expected to go to 12 pay-per-views a year beginning in 2001.

While ECW's future looked uncertain in the early-fall, that didn't seem to be reason for anyone to panic. The wrestling-deficient products of the WWF and WCW are leaving a segment of fans thirsty for more action. ECW is becoming an oasis to more fans each year. □

Making a living on the independent circuit is never easy, but those with dreams of making it big someday have to start somewhere. Nowadays, however, even those who excel in the indies aren't guaranteed a chance to make it in the big leagues (not even those who sign big league contracts)

THE STATE OF INDEPENDENT WRESTLING

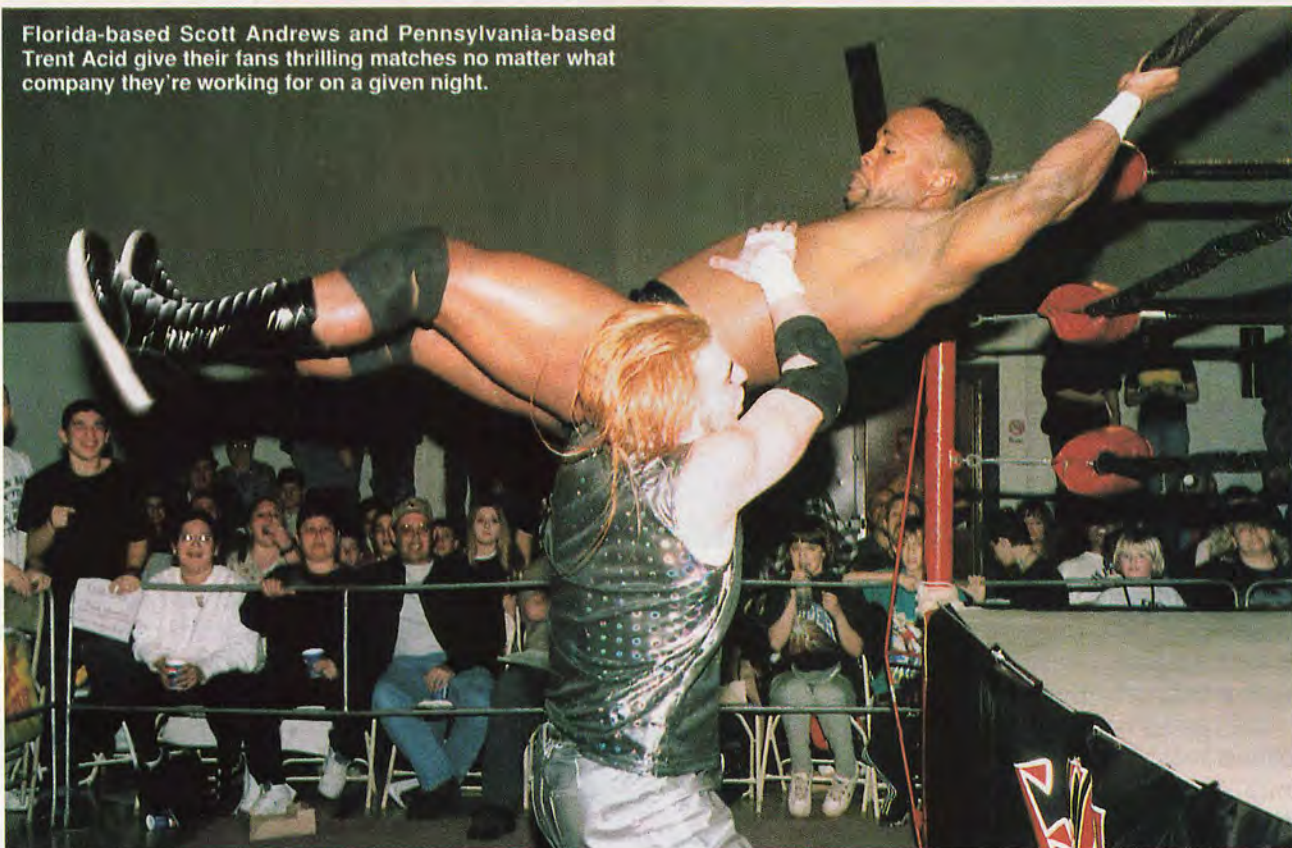


SPORTS ENTERTAINERS AREN'T born—they're made, and typically, they're made on the independent circuit. The independent scene across North America brings together wrestlers, entertainers, sadomasochists, and a few nut cases for a single purpose—the often-elusive chance to make it to the big leagues.

Good news for indy fans: Both Reckless Youth (soaring, left) and Chris Daniels (right) are back on the circuit. The bad news regarding their returns is that they seem to indicate there aren't many spots in the big leagues available to indy standouts.



Florida-based Scott Andrews and Pennsylvania-based Trent Acid give their fans thrilling matches no matter what company they're working for on a given night.



The spotlight rarely shines on the indies, but those few rays that do gleam down on high school gyms, National Guard Armories, VFW halls, county fairgrounds, and other venues that host the stars of the independent circuit are just strong enough to keep the athletes motivated.

The proving grounds for tomorrow's stars have never been more competitive than they are right now.

The top independents in the country grab attention on a regular basis, and the athletes they employ are often the first ones considered for the jump to the major leagues. Memphis Championship Wrestling and Ohio Valley Wrestling are two of the country's more prominent independents, but that's due in part to the fact that they aren't really independents. They're part of the World Wrestling Federation's minor league system.

Both groups are supported in part by the WWF, which fills the ranks of the two independent companies with much of its developmental talent (stars under contract to the company that, for one reason or another, are deemed not quite ready for WWF TV). In these companies, men like Curtis Hughes, Mark Henry, and Steven Regal refined their ring skills in preparation for a return to the WWF. Others, like Nick Dinsmore, Steve Bradley, and Flash Flanagan, are young stars looking to gain valuable experience as they prepare for their first

exposure on a national level. Men in both situations know they must show WWF talent evaluators that they're deserving of an invitation to the big dance.

The WWF also has an affiliate on the West Coast in the form of Ultimate Pro Wrestling. Companies like UPW, Xtreme Pro Wrestling, and All Pro Wrestling (which was featured prominently in the documentary *Beyond The Mat*) have helped to make the left coast indy scene fairly strong. Michael Modest and Christopher Daniels have both been in WCW during the last year but are now back on the indy circuit in California and elsewhere. Both standouts are among the finest technical wrestlers in the country.

The region with the most independent activity remains the northeast quadrant of the country. Most recently, "King Of The Independents" Reckless Youth, a long-time veteran of the region, made his return after leaving Memphis Championship Wrestling and choosing not to extend his WWF developmental deal.

Eager Northeast fans have received the popular star with gusto; his year-long absence hurt a number of promotions in the region. Some of the region's most visible stars, wrestlers like Low Kí and Mike Quackenbush, have assembled loyal followings everywhere they have gone. Top-notch promotions are scattered throughout the territory, from Pennsylvania's Future



Fans of extreme wrestling in New Jersey won't be able to see scenes like this one featuring Madman Pondo in the future. The state is now regulating extreme wrestling shows.

Wrestling Alliance and Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling to New England's North East Wrestling to Delaware's East Coast Wrestling Association (where WWF broadcaster Kevin Kelly is a reviled character).

The Northeast is also home to one of the scene's most infamous promotions, Combat Zone Wrestling. Known for death matches and crazy stipulation bouts that involve everything from light bulbs to thumbtacks, CZW finds an audience amongst the sport's most bloodthirsty fans. A working agreement with the equally violent Big Japan Wrestling has allowed some CZW performers the chance to tour the Orient. Rick Blade, Zandig, and others who have forsaken the more conventional independent groups have found a home in CZW's ultra-extreme environment.

Recent legislation in CZW's home state of New Jersey will spell trouble for that group and for Jersey All Pro Wrestling, though.

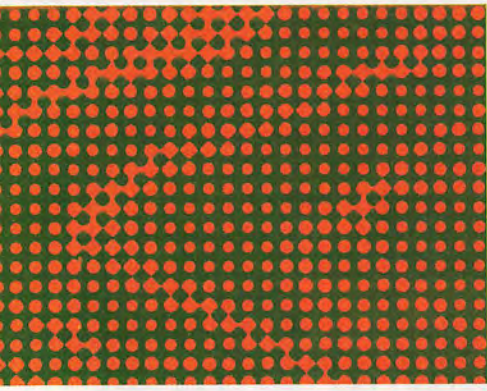
Governor Christine Whitman recently signed into law a bill that will allow the state to regulate extreme wrestling and prohibit those under 18 from attending such events.

Texas had been a wrestling hotbed for years, dating back even to the days before the Von Erich regime. Now, after some bleak years, rival groups like Shawn Michaels' Texas Wrestling Alliance and Marty Jannetty's Power Zone Wrestling provide fans of independent wrestling with plenty of outstanding action. Established

stars like Tommy Rogers and One Man Gang appear opposite young up-and-comers like American Dragon and Samir in the Southwestern mat wars.

Wonder why you haven't seen Mark Henry in the WWF lately? He's still under contract to the federation, but he's been trying to lose weight and improve his conditioning in OVW, one of the WWF's minor league affiliates.





A consistently strong epicenter for independents has always existed in the Southeast, where breakout groups like IPW Hardcore and numerous chapters of the NWA have won fans and acclaim by featuring exciting young talent.

Well-traveled athletes like Jet Jaguar and Scoot Andrews are as popular in Florida as they are much further north, where positive buzz has earned them favorable reputations.

The Mid-Atlantic region is rolling on as top promotions like Maryland Championship Wrestling constantly offer quality shows. Despite the recent departure of regional favorites Joey Matthews, Christian York, and Julio Fantastico (a.k.a. Julio Dinero) for the rings of ECW, fan support remains consistent. Newcomers such as Dino Divine and Qeenan Creed have been drawing a lot of attention since their respective debuts and have already started branching out into other regions.

But while there is reason for optimism for those who toil in the indies, there is also plenty of reason to be pessimistic. It seems as if the big companies aren't paying close attention anymore. WCW has hired independent standouts from around the country on more than one occasion—only to release them before giving them more than a handful of matches. The current freeze on hiring has kept any developing talent from making the leap to WCW.

The WWF, on the other hand, seems content to keep developing talent in the training camp circuit indefinitely. While the Steven Regals, Big Shows, and Mark Henrys make pit stops on their way back to the big game,

younger stars with potential like K. Krush have to wait and wait for a call. The potential for vertical movement in the industry isn't so great right now.

For the rapidly developing heroes of the indy circuit, the future isn't looking all that bright, either. Many of them must deal with the fact that due to the overwhelming success of the WWF, the continuing financial problems of WCW, and the uncertain future of ECW, their chances of reaching the top of the game anytime soon are not good. Which means fans will have to continue filling into those high school gyms, National Guard Armories, and VFW halls to watch the future superstars of pro wrestling shine. □



ECW still scours the independents looking for the best available talent. All the hard work Christian York and Joey Matthews put in on the independent circuit paid off when Paul Heyman came calling.

Over the summer, long-time All-Japan competitor Mitsuharu Misawa broke away from the company and took most of the promotion's roster with him. The effects are still being felt throughout the international scene

THE STATE OF INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING



BEFORE THE WWF rebounded and started thoroughly dominating the ratings wars, before the explosion in popularity of Steve Austin and The Rock, the largest wrestling company in the world was New Japan Pro Wrestling. In the last four years, though, New Japan has seen business nose-dive, and watched as its main competitor, All-Japan Pro Wrestling, crumbled at its foundation.

What's left is a *puroresu* playing field littered with a variety of companies, all fighting to keep the attention of Japanese fans who have become increasingly interested in American wrestling. The Japanese Big Two are now the Japanese Big Three, and everyone underneath is clamoring for a bigger piece of an already sliced up pie.

The newest kid to move in on a very crowded block is Pro Wrestling NOAH, a promotion formed

by Mitsuharu Misawa shortly after his departure from All-Japan this summer. Office politics and irreconcilable differences with All-Japan head Motoko Baba precipitated Misawa's departure. This left All-Japan without its top drawing star and most dominant wrestler, but what happened next was cataclysmic.

Though Mitsuharu Misawa and Kenta Kobashi have had their wars, when Misawa picked up and left All-Japan to start Pro Wrestling NOAH, Kobashi, who was All-Japan's Triple Crown champion at the time, was quick to follow.

Following Misawa's lead, 24 other All-Japan wrestlers left the company, including other top names like Kenta Kobashi and Jun Akiyama. The

group of free agents formed NOAH and began promoting shows in early-August. Financial problems have plagued the fledgling group, and recent legal issues with All-Japan have cost the company a lucrative television deal. The future for NOAH is uncertain, but for now, its star power is enough to keep crowds interested and house show attendance at a respectable level.

When many of the All-Japan regulars left to form NOAH with Misawa, it was the foreigners who remained. Motoko Baba has become dependent on American-born wrestlers like Mike Barton and Stan Hansen.

The Misawa-All-Japan split has benefited New Japan the most. Stuck in a rut caused by stale title scenes and a failure to deliver matches it promised to fans, New Japan has needed something to help push it back to the top of the *puroresu* ladder. Recently, it has taken advantage of the All-Japan talent exodus and forged a working agreement with its former rival. As partners, New Japan and All-Japan will be able to book matches long thought impossible, and the potential bouts have the Japanese media and fans excited. Those who have waited and waited to see interpromotional matches between All-Japan and New Japan stars will at last be satisfied.

This can only be good for both companies. All-Japan has had to fill its cards with new faces, and long-time AJPW fans are feeling a little let down. Tours that were headlined by Japanese mainstays like Akira Taue and Takao Omori are now featuring less popular wrestlers like Super Calo and George Hines. The New Japan agreement has, however, done wonders for the company. If the anticipation for the bout between the legendary Toshiaki Kawada and IWGP champion Kensuke Sasaki is any indication of what's to come, both All-Japan and New Japan fans will have plenty to smile about.

A full-fledged feud between the companies



should boost ticket sales and overall revenue for the companies, which so far have been generous in loaning talent back and forth.

Japan isn't the only place where uncharacteristic partnerships have cropped up. Earlier in the year, AAA and EMLL, the two biggest promotions in Mexico, put on a supercard featuring matches between the companies' stars. Some of the matches even saw tag teams comprised of wrestlers



In need of wrestlers to fill its roster, All-Japan opened its doors to international sensations like Super Calo (left) and Sabu (against Jinsei Shinzaki, above). Even with such high-profile stars on its roster, All-Japan still struggled.

from both promotions. While the show was a box office success, philosophical differences and egos have ensured that this definitely was a one-time-only occurrence.

In the last three years, Lucha Libre companies have suffered tremendous talent losses, as ECW and WCW absorbed some of Mexico's top per-

formers. However, in the last 10 months, many of Lucha's hottest stars have returned to Mexico, which has served to heighten fan interest.

Super Crazy, La Parka, and El Dandy are top draws in Mexico, and American wrestling's loss is Lucha Libre's gain. All the Mexican promotions have enjoyed surges in attendance since the return of these stars. While imitators like Psicosis II and Super Parka have shown up around the country, the return of the genuine articles has come at



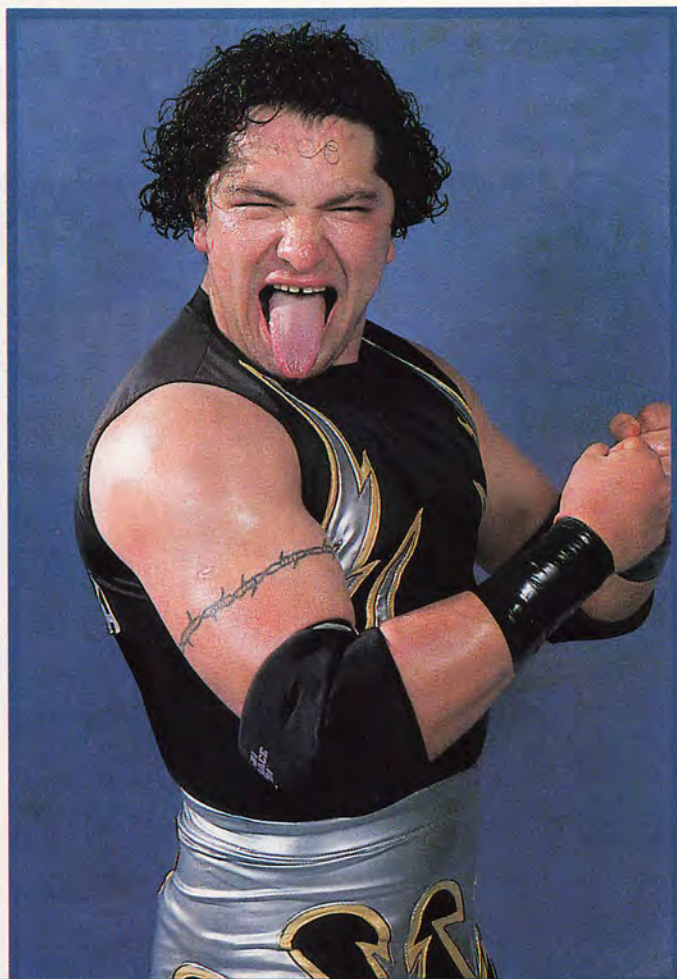
Despite being arch-rivals for years, New Japan and All-Japan teamed up following the Misawa defection. Matches featuring New Japan stars against All-Japan stars, like this one pitting Masa Chono against Masa Fuchi, have become the norm—and very popular.

exactly the right time for ailing Lucha companies.

Right now, CMLL appears to be settling into a position as the country's top promotion. Since March 2000, it has hosted two pay-per-view events, which are rarities in Mexico. Veteran Luchadores like Atlantis, Perro Aguayo, and Villano III have kept the promotion strong, while younger talent such as the daredevil Ricky Marvin has helped propel the company forward. Although the balance of power is quick to shift in Mexico's volatile Lucha scene, CMLL has a very good chance of enjoying a solid run as the top company for at least the foreseeable future.

Having experienced work visa problems, ECW standout Super Crazy returned to Mexico over the summer. Crazy and a slew of other Luchadores who were released by WCW have helped to revitalize the Lucha scene.

Just as recently as a year ago, business was down in both Mexico and Japan. More changes are coming, though, and the next 12 months could see a complete turnaround for the top companies in both countries. Fans of *puroresu* are set to see matches that were previously unthinkable, and Lucha fans are continuing to embrace their returning superstars. It'll be up to the big leagues to deliver quality shows to keep fans enthusiastic about watching wrestling. □



What have wrestling's major stars accomplished in 2000?
What will they do in 2001? These stars must take the
initiative now ... because stardom can be fleeting

THE STATE OF THE STARS

WHO ARE THE PREMIER athletes in pro wrestling today? The fact that Steve Austin is the only wrestler to appear in both the 1998 and 2001 "State Of The Stars" proves that wrestling is a rapidly changing business. Being a genuine "star" is that brief state between "rising star" and "former star." In this feature, we examine 10 wrestlers at the peak of their abilities.

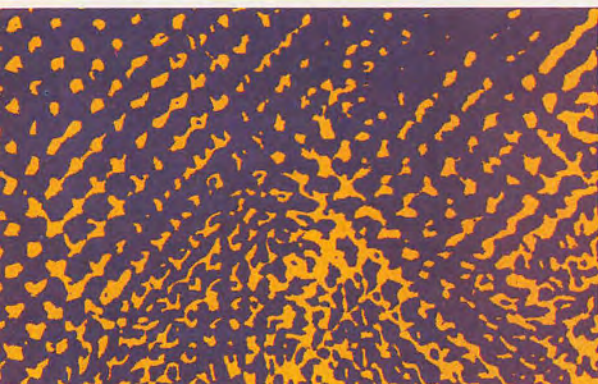
Of course, all three men

who were world champions as of this writing make the cut: WWF champion The Rock, WCW champion Booker T, and ECW champion Justin Credible. Steve Austin and Triple-H are former WWF champs who are sure to make an impact in the coming year. Bill Goldberg, Chris Benoit, Scott Steiner, and Rob Van Dam are among

those who have been touted as future megastars—and 2001 could make or break their careers. U.S.

The Rock, the top star in the sport right now, tries to rip the head off of Chris Benoit, another WWF star who made this year's "State Of The Stars." Benoit's stock has risen since he's become Rock's most aggressive adversary.





Booker T clamps down on Jeff Jarrett with a headlock during their feud for the WCW World title. In the past six months, Booker has become the star many wrestling observers always thought he could be.

champ Lance Storm wasn't expected to be in the upper echelon so soon, but Team Canada has boosted him to great heights in WCW.

Popularity and momentum shift among competitors every few days. The following is a snapshot of who's on top in pro wrestling ... and what they must do to stay there.

THE ROCK

Has The Rock met expectations as WWF World champion? Our answer is yes. The Rock defends the title on nearly every edition of *Raw* and *Smackdown*, headlines virtually every WWF pay-per-view, and appears at house shows throughout North America. Traditionally, a federation's champion is its representative to the world and, in that regard, the WWF couldn't find a more articulate spokesman.

Even more impressive is the frequency with which the people's champion defends the belt in three-way and four-way bouts. Instead of whining about being placed in unfair situations, as "Euro-Intercontinental champion" Kurt Angle did several months ago, Rock approaches these matches with gusto. Rock's most persistent challenger has not been Triple-H, as most suspected, but Chris Benoit. The Rock's inability to gain a decisive victory over Benoit is the only blemish on his current WWF title reign. Rock's difficulty with Benoit makes his technical weaknesses more glaring. Kurt Angle will cause him even more problems.

BOOKER T

Booker T symbolized the change that needed to occur in WCW. He had worked tirelessly for six years yet failed



to crack the upper echelon. Booker's 10 WCW tag team titles and seven TV titles were proof of WCW's glass ceiling: There were too many established stars crowded at the top—and no one wanted to make room for Booker.

All of that changed at Bash at the Beach when Vince Russo dismissed Hulk Hogan's WCW title "win" over Jeff Jarrett and forced Jarrett to defend against Booker. The former member of Harlem Heat captured his first world title. He dropped the belt to Kevin Nash a couple of months later but regained it in decisive fashion at Fall Brawl.

Booker's weaknesses lie in his marketability rather than his in-ring ability. He should avoid WCW's efforts to depict him as "Rock Lite." Every time Booker executes a Book-end or uses a new catch-phrase, unfair comparisons are made between Booker and The Rock. So what does Booker's future hold? He may survive the challenges of Russo's clique, but can he survive Bill Goldberg? A Starrcade main event between the two would be fascinating.



Here are two stars featured in this year's "State Of The Stars." While Justin Credible became a star the minute he won the ECW World title from Tommy Dreamer, Lance Storm's star didn't really shine until he jumped to WCW.

JUSTIN CREDIBLE

He's not just the coolest and not just the best in ECW. Justin Credible has emerged as the most dominant world champion of the Big Three. He beat Tommy Dreamer for the ECW World title at CyberSlam and has defended the belt on a consistent basis for nearly six months.

Unlike most rulebreaking champions, Credible doesn't avoid challengers. If someone makes noise about wanting a shot, Justin is the first person breathing in the guy's face. He reigns through intimidation and tries to destroy challengers before matches ever take place.

The best example of this is his current series of title defenses against Steve Corino. The two men had been allies working for The Network, but Corino said he was tired of "carrying" Cyrus and Credible. Nothing stirs hatred in Credible like the betrayal of former friends and, with Francine's help, he will be utterly ruthless against Corino. Looming large is a potential series of matches against Rob Van Dam, who is waiting patiently for his shot at the gold. If the champ can survive those contests, it will be *just incredible*.

LANCE STORM

Lance Storm's defection to WCW was a smart one. He rose to prominence in ECW as Justin Credible's partner and became a World tag team champ there, but his technical style seemed like an odd fit in the extreme pro-

motion. In an era in which wrestlers who leave WCW make headlines, it's surprising when a star actually becomes a perfect fit. That's what happened to Storm. Within only a few weeks of his

WCW debut, Storm was the U.S., cruiserweight, and hardcore champion. He was the first man in federation history to wear three singles titles simultaneously.

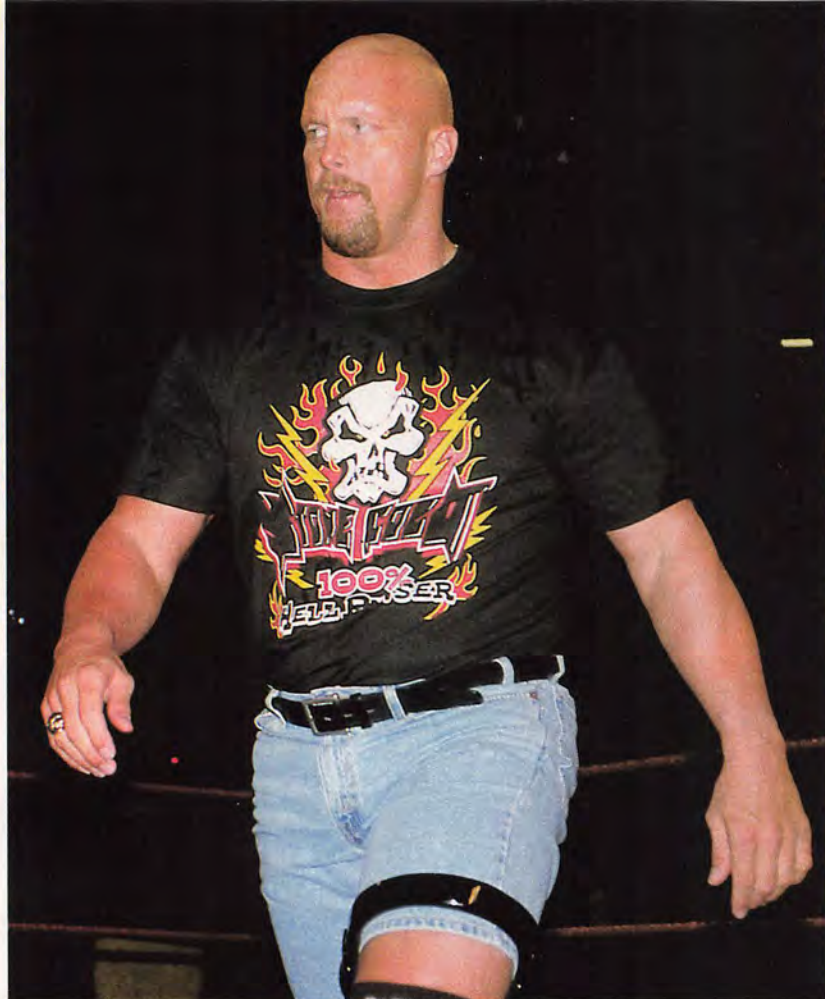
His second smart move was the establishment of Team Canada. But the quick departures of Jacques Rougeau and Carl Ouellette left him with only Elix Skipper. Desperate for backup, he wooed Jim Duggan into Canadian citizenship. Storm's fanatic nationalism has created a buzz, and the U.S.-Canada war in WCW might be his springboard to greatness.

STEVE AUSTIN

The former WWF champ returned to a thunderous ovation at Unforgiven and immediately began his personal investigation into who ran him over with a car at last year's Survivor Series. Austin's return after a 10-month absence provides a fresh twist to all WWF storylines. His interactions with wrestlers who have risen to prominence during his absence will be the most intriguing.

How will he deal with Chris Benoit and Kurt Angle? That question was answered on *Raw*'s premiere on TNN when he executed stunners on both during the opening segment. He also had a nose-to-nose confrontation with Triple-H, another superstar who benefited from Austin's absence.

The only man Austin hasn't tried to intimidate is WWF World champion The Rock. Has he eliminated The Rock



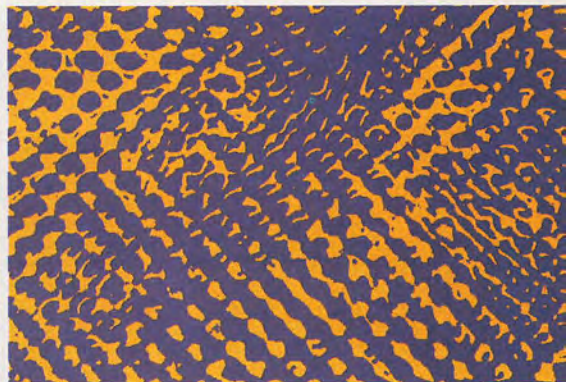
from his investigation? Or is he saving his big confrontation with Rock until a more opportune time? History shows the latter is more likely correct.

BILL GOLDBERG

Goldberg has been struggling ever since he lost the WCW title to Kevin Nash at Starrcade '98. For the past two years, Goldberg has been dragged down by injuries, contract disputes, and creative differences. He remains the company's number-one star, as he has been since his rookie year, yet Goldberg's numerous enemies—Scott Steiner, Kevin Nash, Bret Hart, and Vince Russo—might be too much to overcome.

Each of those men lives for Goldberg's destruction. That, coupled with the fact

For more than a year, Goldberg annihilated every wrestler with the guts to stand across the ring from him. He has regained some of his lost momentum recently, but he might never again be the star he was in 1997-98.



Steve Austin appeared to be in excellent shape when he returned to the WWF at Unforgiven. He'll need to be as he prepares for showdowns with all the WWF's top stars.

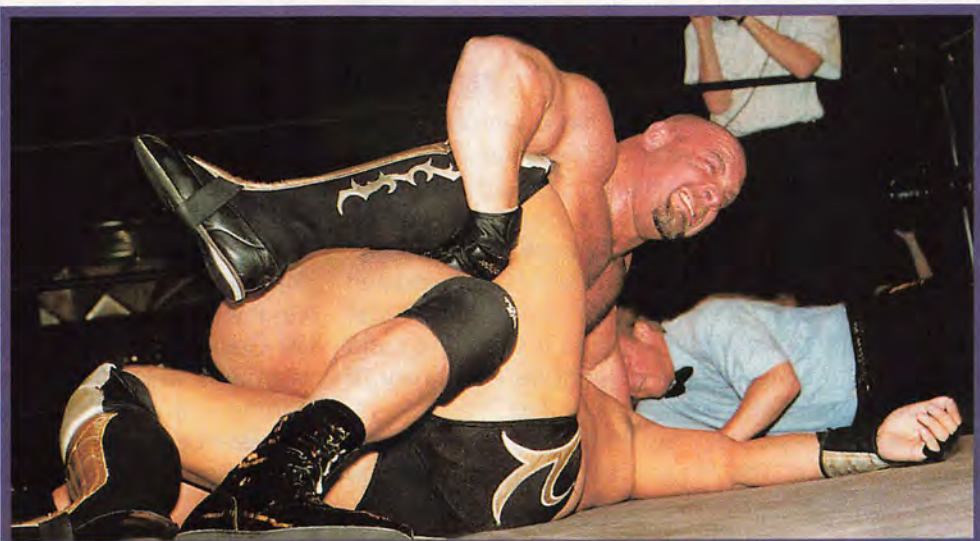
that Booker T is a popular World champion, is holding back the former Atlanta Falcon. But Goldberg's failure isn't due to a lack of trying. He even turned bad by joining Russo's New Blood. Goldberg found that relationship so repugnant that he apologized for his actions. His only recourse is to directly

challenge Booker T—even if it's not popular.

TRIPLE-H

Has Triple-H lost his focus? The most dominant WWF champ of the past year is distracted by a love triangle involving himself, his wife, and Kurt Angle. Apparently, fans hate Angle more than Triple-H, which in the past would have been a profound insult to Helmsley.

It seems that Triple-H is tired of being the bad guy. He remains aggressive, but he now confronts people in a





Triple-H became one of wrestling's biggest stars in 2000. On the way, he helped Chris Jericho gain main-event status, too. Triple-H was the WWF's MVP over the past year.

has become The Rock's greatest nemesis. That's the secret to Benoit's success. Benoit becomes more dangerous as he becomes more familiar with a particular wrestler's style. That's why he was so effective in his best-of-seven series with Booker T

man-to-man kind of way. Sledgehammer attacks, relying on Stephanie for outside interference, and manipulative tactics are things of the past.

Ironically, Angle is using Triple-H's previous methods to get ahead in the WWF. He's even trying to steal Helmsley's wife. Is Angle trying to steal his life?

That appears to be the case ... and Triple-H might let him have it. Until Helmsley can rid himself of Angle, he won't have time to challenge WWF World champion The Rock. In the meantime, Triple-H is emerging as a hero. Not a bad tradeoff.

CHRIS BENOIT

Of all the competitors who have jumped to the WWF over the past two years, Chris Benoit and Chris Jericho have benefited the most. For too many years, Benoit was relegated to being a junior member of The Four Horsemen in WCW. For too many years, he was denied U.S. and TV title shots. When Benoit vacated the WCW World title and went to the WWF last January with Dean Malenko, Eddie Guerrero, and Perry Saturn, some people thought he was crazy. It turns out that Benoit's timing was perfect.

He was considered an underdog in his early matches against The Rock. Over time, however, he

for the WCW TV title. That's why he dominated Jericho.

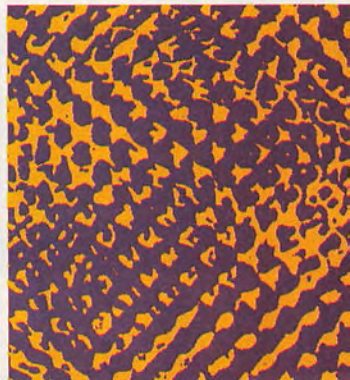
That's why he's the favorite to beat The Rock.

SCOTT STEINER

It's easy to hate Scott Steiner. The arrogance, vulgarity, and brutality are too much. It might be his sneer. It might be that thing he wears on his head.

"Big Poppa Pump" has few redeeming qualities. He's a genetic freak, and for his body and in-ring ability, he deserves respect. But he deserves respect for something else: his courageous comeback. Two vertebrae in Steiner's back had burst and his injuries were compared to those of Shawn Michaels. It was considered a minor miracle that Steiner ever returned.

Steiner has not only returned, but he has firmly established himself in WCW's top tier. He's one of the few major stars in WCW never to have won the World championship. It will be a surprise if Steiner doesn't win the gold in 2001. That's why his current feud with Bill Goldberg will prove invaluable. The conventional wisdom is that Goldberg could beat World champion Booker T if given the opportunity. If that happens, Steiner—because of his tainted victory over Goldberg at Fall Brawl—will be a heavy favorite.



Until this year, Scott Steiner's biggest success came as a tag team wrestler. Now, though, "Big Poppa Pump" is WCW's (and Midajah's) hookup. A WCW World championship should be his by the end of 2001.

Van Dam has been back for six months. Other than a few staredowns with ECW World champion Justin

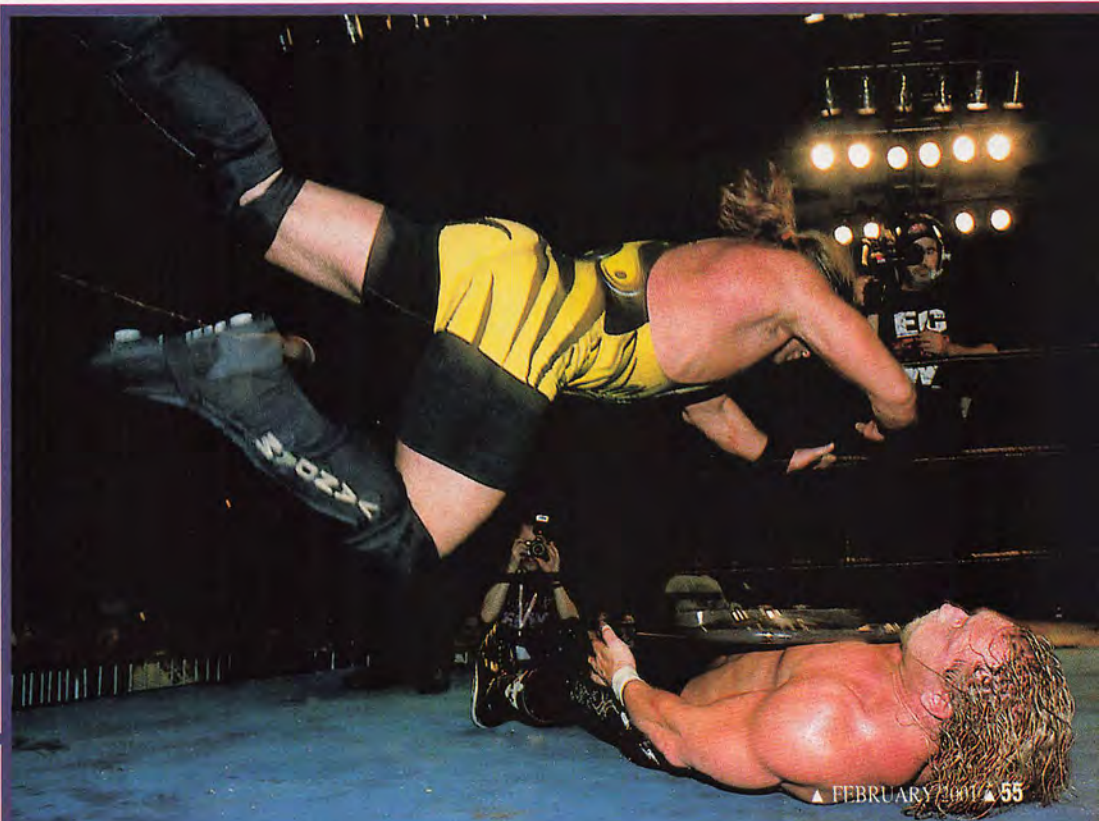
ROB VAN DAM

RVD is taking his sweet time. No one seems to know why. When he approached his second year as ECW TV champ, experts wondered why he didn't make a vigorous challenge for the World title. Was he content as TV champ? Was he afraid of failure?

Rob Van Dam was too comfortable with the TV belt. Diehard RVD fans thought it was actually a stroke of luck when Van Dam broke his ankle and was stripped of the TV title in early-2000. Van Dam would be free to pursue the World championship upon his return.

Before Rob Van Dam returned from his ankle injury this summer, most ECW pundits believed he'd go after Justin Credible's World title upon his return. RVD, however, had other things on his mind, like wrestling Jerry Lynn.

Credible, RVD hasn't made a real challenge for the title. Perhaps Van Dam has a master plan. He could be waiting for ECW to sign a national cable contract with either USA or FX before he makes his move. Maybe Credible will be gutsy enough make the first move ... and force Van Dam into a showdown. □



In 2000, exciting means extreme and extreme means extra injuries. For better or worse, professional wrestling has gone hardcore in more ways than one

THE STATE OF THE ART

ROLLING INTO THE 21st century is the most violent, high-risk style of wrestling that fans have ever seen. Somewhere between a circus acrobat routine and a Jackie Chan film, the current style of pro wrestling is more dangerous and outrageous than ever before. Have things gotten too high-risk? Have things gone too far?

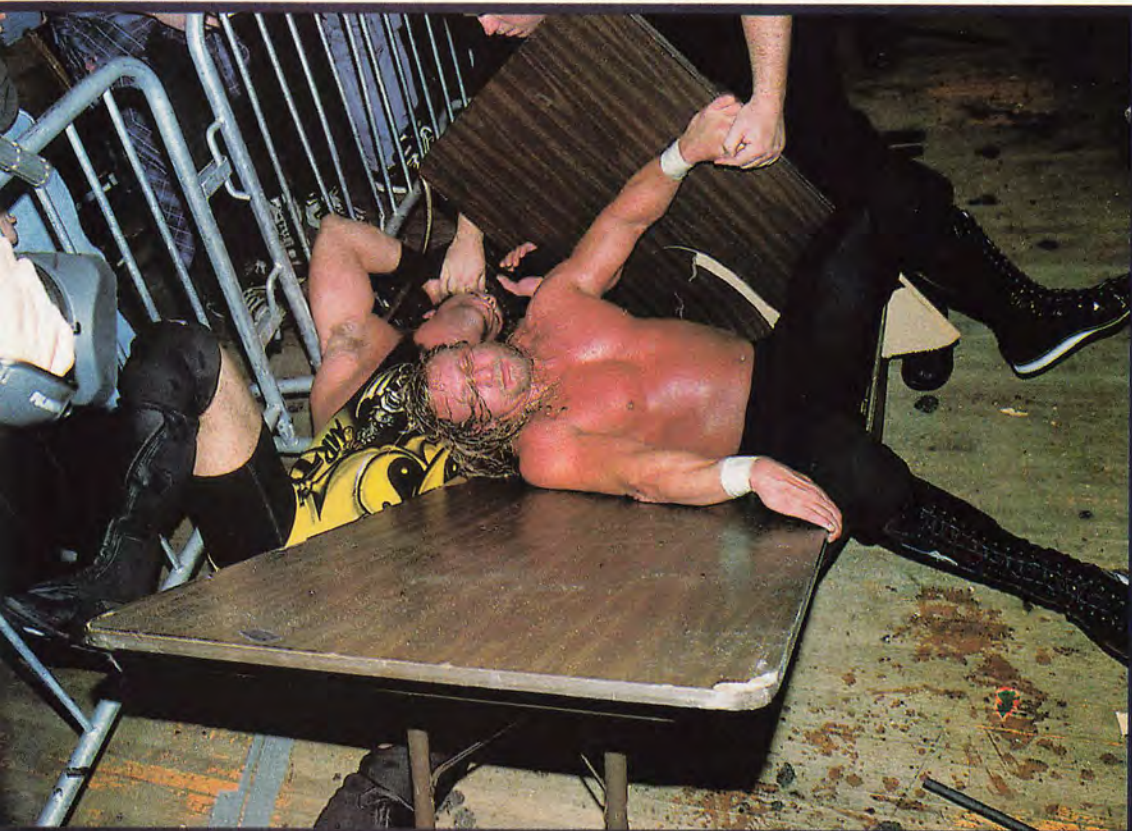
You bet.

And it's hard to believe the trend will reverse itself.

As TV ratings and mass audience appeal continue to increase, we're not likely to see wrestlers or promoters move to slow down matches and emphasize the conservative approach.

Not long ago, the extreme style of wrestling was one that was embraced by a relatively small percentage of fans. During the last few years, however, the outrageous has become widely accepted and anticipated ... and more popular than ever. It's

hard to find a wrestling show—be it a WWF, WCW, ECW, or independent card—that doesn't make liberal use of chairs and tables as part of its standard presentation. Broken furniture is here to stay, and the use of it only seems to grow in popu-



Rob Van Dam and Jerry Lynn recover after going through a table. While Van Dam and Lynn could wrestle an excellent match without the use of dangerous high spots, it's uncertain if today's fans would appreciate such a display.



Buh Buh Ray and D-Von Dudley treated Mae Young as if she were a toy for their sadistic pleasure earlier this year. There's no need to harass a woman as old as Mae, but it made the Dudleys marketable, so the WWF went with it.

larity as more and more superstars (and those who have a long way to go before they become superstars) give and take more and more shots.

While this style has certainly attracted a larger audience for wrestling, it has also taken its toll on the sport's athletes. Injuries have proliferated, and careers are being shortened. While veterans of the old school, lower-risk style, like Sting and Randy Savage, have managed to prolong their careers, men like Mick Foley, who did so much to popularize the hardcore style, find themselves headed for retirement before the age of 40. Taking a few chair shots to the head on a given night might not seem like a big deal, but what happens when you take them on a nightly basis for years upon years? Men like Foley know the answer to that question all too well.

And it's not as if the extreme style is the exclusive property of the sport's young lions. Even septuagenarian Mae Young has been put through tables, and 56-year-old legend Terry Funk is still as hardcore as anyone. He just can't pull himself away from the limelight and the big paydays that go along with being in it.

Generally speaking, though, to adopt the extreme style is to consign yourself to a shortened career and place yourself in a position to incur serious and repeated injuries.

Those who embrace the extreme style must also deal with the fact that as long as they offer fans

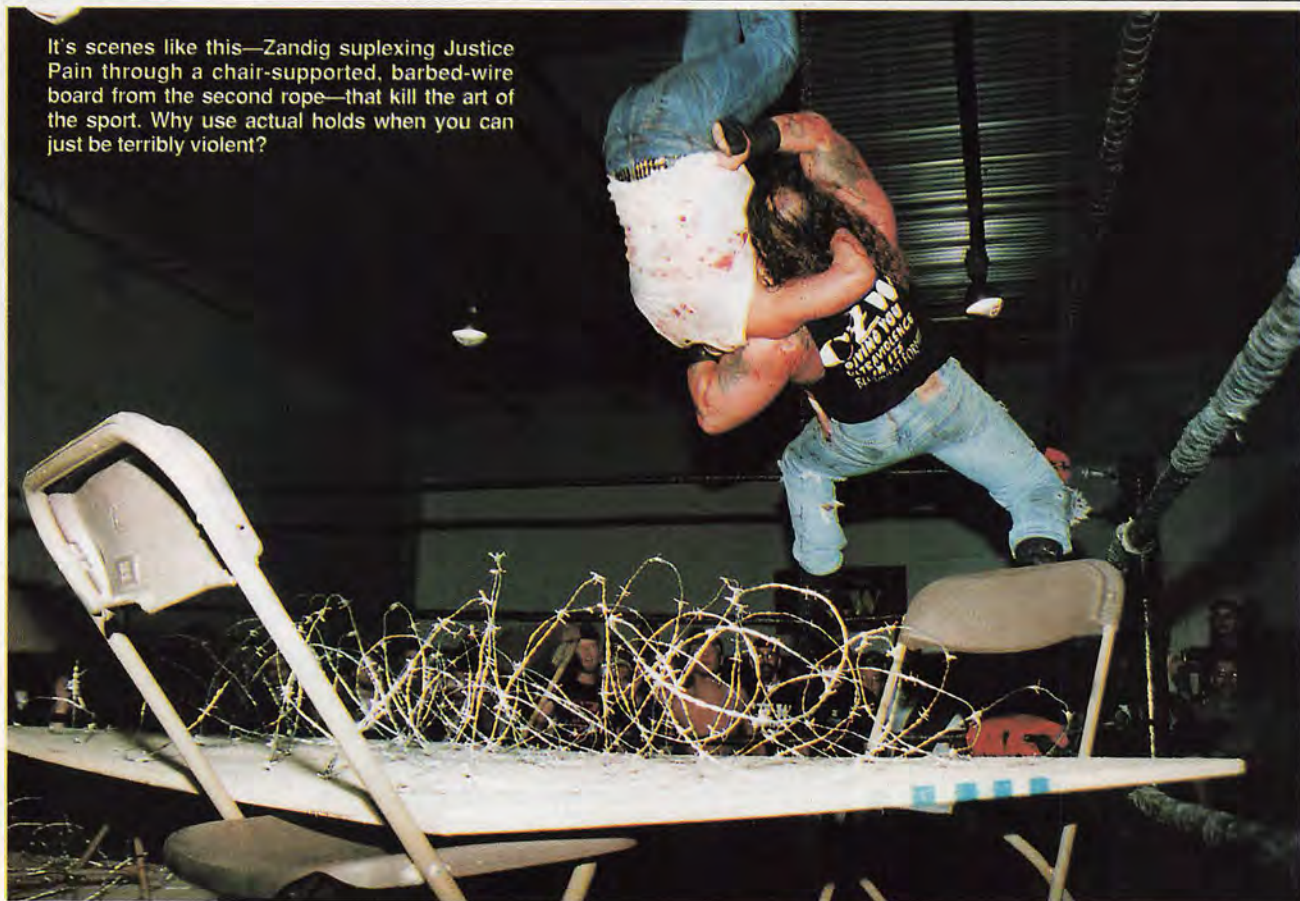


extreme matches, they must find new, innovative, and more dangerous ways to win the approval of the same people the next time out. And without the support of the fans, which drives a wrestler's marketabili-

"Macho Man" Randy Savage enjoyed a long career because he mainly wrestled plodding big men like Kevin Nash. It's hard to believe that at one time, Savage's top-rope elbowdrop was considered a high-risk maneuver.



It's scenes like this—Zandig suplexing Justice Pain through a chair-supported, barbed-wire board from the second rope—that kill the art of the sport. Why use actual holds when you can just be terribly violent?



ty, a wrestler is going to make little money.

And, ultimately, that's what professional wrestling is about. It is a profession.

When every Monday night is a battle for ratings points and every independent show is a fight for territorial supremacy, popular, marketable wrestlers make all the difference. The members of the winning team will be rewarded handsomely for their efforts in making the promotion successful.

Right now, no one will argue with the success of the World Wrestling Federation. Being number one ensures only one thing—everyone underneath you will try to emulate what you've been doing. With each passing pay-per-view and televised event, the WWF does everything in its power to widen the gap between itself and its closest rival, WCW. Every broken table, every super high-risk move, and every crazy stunt only serves to make it tougher on the guy who wants to show that he can do better.

The result in some cases is that certain independent groups will seemingly allow wrestlers to do anything short of murder in the ring. That may be an overstatement, but it's clear that there are a number of performers in the business now who don't look a whole lot like wrestlers. Instead, they're risk-takers who will do their best to ignore pain and common sense as they attempt to shock fans.

The effect that all of this has had on the state of the art is obvious: There's practically no art to it at all.

While technical artists like Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, and others continue to remind us that there still are some great *wrestlers* in professional wrestling, the dominant trend favors the high-risk performers that, more times than not, dispense with wrestling altogether in favor of stunt work and property damage.

The art of wrestling, in the age of sports entertainment, has been all but lost.

Certainly, the days of Ric Flair and Rick Steamboat wrestling scientific matches to the 60-minute time limit are all but gone. Most televised wrestling matches last roughly five minutes nowadays, and pay-per-view matches rarely extend beyond the 20-minute mark.

Wrestlers no longer fill their arsenals with strategically planned wear-down holds targeted at weaknesses in an opponent's defense. Instead, repertoires consist largely of vicious high-impact moves designed more for knocking an opponent out than tiring him out. The spear, the stunner, the pedigree, and the Van Terminator are all wonderful finishers because they are great knockout moves.

Five-minute matches don't involve four minutes of breaking down an opponent's arm before applying an armbar submission. Five-minute matches dispense with



Because his body took so much abuse over the years, Mick Foley is now the WWF commissioner instead of an active wrestler (above). And Bret Hart's failure to fully recover from a Bill Goldberg kick point to the fact that even a simple move can lead to early retirement (right).

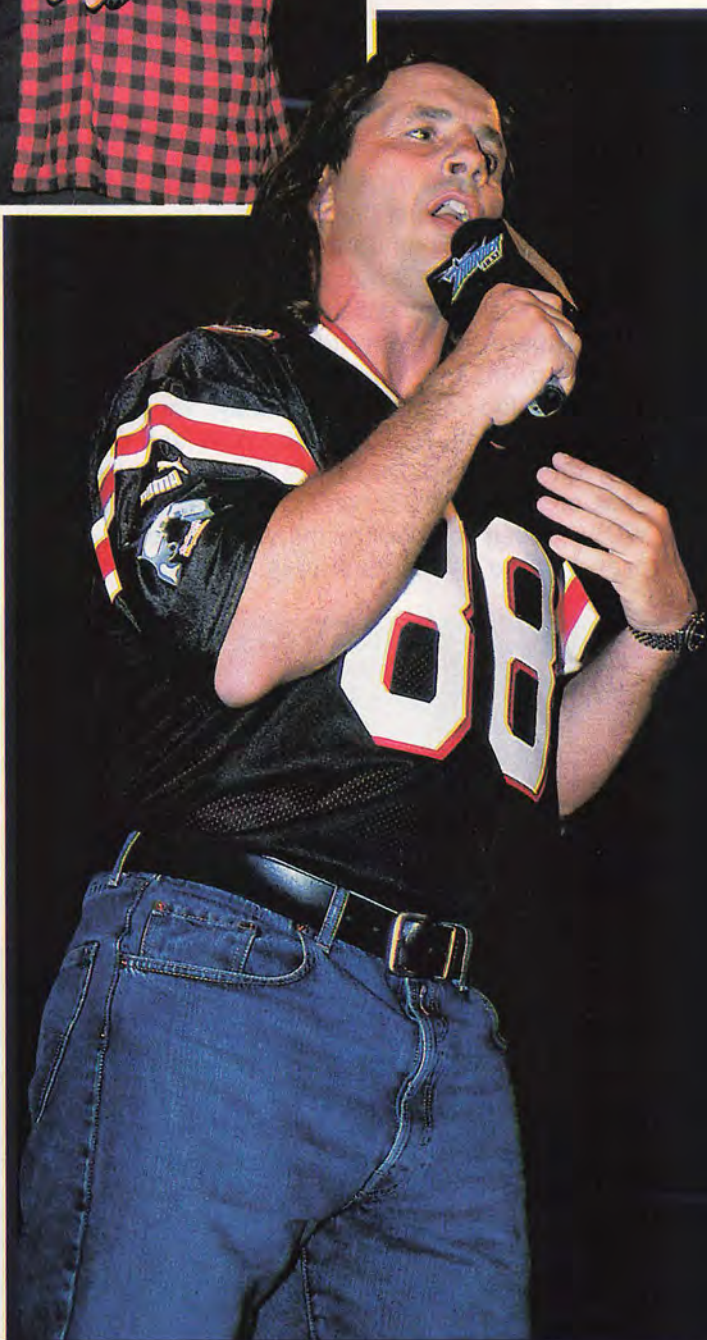
the concept of an offensive wrestling strategy altogether. The favored approach has become one of guerrilla offense—hit hard, hit fast, and get out.

The fans will ultimately be announced as the winners of these bouts; the fast-paced, hard-hitting action is captivating in its brutality, and it provides a lot of entertainment.

The athletes, however, will invariably lose, as their bodies suffer the effects of matches so exhausting and devastating that five minutes of action leave them incapable of raising their shoulders off the mat.

The end result of this new, more extreme, more hardcore style of wrestling will be a quicker turnaround in talent. Wrestling careers will no longer last 20 years. Retirement at age 30 will not seem out of the ordinary. New faces will emerge constantly to take even greater risks, as the unending oneupmanship in the sport only grows, fueled by everyone's desire to make it to the top and cash the big checks. As wrestling continues to move in this direction, wrestlers' bodies will break more often, more severely, and in some cases, permanently.

The use of furniture will only escalate, and pedestrian violence will replace the need for wrestling skill. Pro wrestling will seem more and more like an action movie and less like a sport. And the art of actual wrestling will take another step in a march toward extinction. □



How's the business of wrestling? WCW and ECW should call their CPAs. For the WWF, there's no business as good as the wrestling business

THE STATE OF THE BUSINESS

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING, AT its core, is a business. Just like baseball, boxing, hockey, rock 'n' roll, and motivational speaking, everything in wrestling, like most other endeavors, boils down to the almighty dollar.

And there are plenty of dollars to be earned in wrestling. Making money in wrestling, however, requires a top-notch product. Today, the WWF is the undisputed moneymaker, with WCW and ECW lagging far, far behind. During the industry's great comeback of 1996 and '97, "wrestling" was the buzzword. WCW, closely followed by the WWF, was the hottest brand name in the business. In one of the few

instances in which Vince McMahon has shared the stage with anyone, WWF and WCW stars were featured simultaneously on collectors' covers of *TV Guide*.

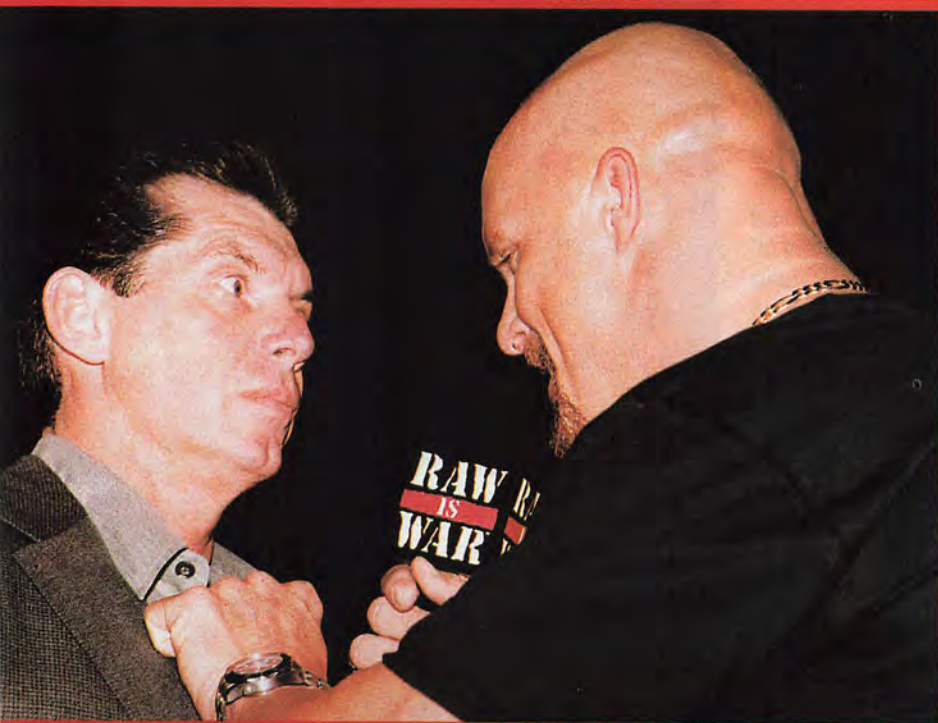
That might have been the last time the WWF and WCW were mentioned in the same sentence, unless you watch *Larry King Live* on the Time Warner-owned CNN. It's been almost three years since Steve Austin helped the WWF reclaim the number-one spot in North America. The WWF's "Attitude" marketing strategy was a key factor, but more than anything else, it was the strength of two conflicting personalities that enabled *Raw* to defeat *Monday Nitro* in the ratings on

a consistent basis: Steve Austin and Vince McMahon. Winning the Monday night war was the essential first step the WWF had to take to become number one again.

Now, mainstream television programs such as *Entertainment Tonight* cover the WWF almost exclusively, not wrestling as a whole. The WWF and wrestling have become synonymous again, as they were in the 1980s.

The WWF turnaround is one of the most dramatic stories in corporate America. During fiscal year 1996, the federation lost \$6.5-million. That was the main reason McMahon allowed Bret Hart to

The feud between Vince McMahon and "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin propelled the WWF to heights previously unheard of for a wrestling company.





The signing of Bret Hart by WCW changed wrestling forever. With Hart's payroll no longer weighing the WWF down, the company achieved great success. And WCW's mishandling of Hart hindered that organization greatly.

break his contract and go to WCW. The WWF could no longer afford to pay him.

Continue following the numbers. By fiscal year 1999, after the Steve Austin phenomenon, the WWF generated \$251-million in revenue, resulting in \$56-million in profits. Merchandise sales leaped from \$18-million in 1997 to \$81-million in 1999—an increase of 450 percent! The WWF was valued at \$600-million in 1999.

The WWF went public in the fall of 1999 when Vince McMahon allowed 20 percent of his company to be purchased by investors on the Nasdaq National Market. Titan Sports Inc., the WWF's parent company, became World Wrestling Federation Entertainment Inc. Due to the infusion of investment capital, the WWF's value rose to a whopping \$850-million.

With all this money floating around the business, there must be plenty of cash for everybody, right? Not really. WCW, which was largely responsible for igniting the current boom period, did horrible business in fiscal year 2000. WCW's continual losses in the Monday night ratings war, record low pay-per-



Should Bill Goldberg be blamed for WCW's woes? Hardly. There's more wrong with WCW than just one disenchanted superstar.

view buy rates, and falling attendance attributed to its dismal financial picture. Some of ECW's pay-per-views have even leapfrogged WCW's in terms of buy rates.

What is responsible for WCW's decline? Overblown salaries and a creative glut were the primary factors. Bill Goldberg is reportedly paid \$2-million per year, while Ric Flair's salary is in the high six digits. The salaries of Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and Dallas Page are in the same range. Obviously, some stars are worth it and some aren't. Those big salaries are hard to justify when so little revenue is coming in, however.

WCW's financial state isn't as black and white as the WWF's. Technically, WCW is a publicly traded company, but it is splintered among several Time Warner holdings. There's no single public document

that details WCW's profits and losses. Early reports on fiscal year 2000, from inside WCW, indicated the company had lost \$20-million. Then it was \$40-million. Then \$80-million.

While it's hard to pinpoint the exact figures, there's no doubt WCW is ailing. WCW now avoids major venues such as Philadelphia's First Union Spectrum, aware it can no longer fill the seats.

WCW has implemented some cost-cutting measures to get its budget back in order. Many up-and-comers with developmental deals have been released. So have Roddy Piper and The Artist. Starting late-October, *Thunder* was to be taped immediately following live *Monday Nitro* broadcasts instead of on Tuesday nights. That may save a great deal of money, but it also figured to extinguish any crowd enthusiasm that existed on *Thunder*, since anything that happens after *Nitro* will be anticlimactic. Many fans won't stay until midnight to watch a *Thunder* taping, especially if they must go to work/school the next

morning. The energy level of the wrestlers will be hitting a low ebb at that time, too.

Time Warner is desperate to improve WCW's financial performance, or at least minimize its losses, as it attempts to merge with America Online. What was once a prized asset of the Time Warner empire has become a fiscal embarrassment, especially when compared to the WWF's unprecedented success in the same industry.

Likewise, two important deals probably saved ECW from bankruptcy in 1999. Rumors circulated that ECW would be forced to shut down, but a video game deal with Acclaim and a contract with The Nashville Network for a national prime time cable show grabbed the extreme promotion from the brink. *ECW On TNN* debuted on August 27, 1999, and consistently reached 1.0 in the ratings. That was a low rating compared to those of the WWF or WCW, but it was good enough to be the highest-ranked program on TNN most weeks. The show was the anchor for TNN's "Friday Night Thrill Zone" lineup and boosted ratings for *Motor Madness*, *Rollerjam*, and *Rock 'n' Bowl*.

The wrestling business underwent another major shift when the WWF signed a deal with Viacom that brought *Raw*, *Live Wire*, and *Superstars* to the revamped *National Network* and moved *Sunday Night Heat* to MTV. *Smackdown* remains on the Viacom-owned UPN.

USA Networks fought Viacom and the WWF in court, insisting it had the "first right of refusal" on WWF programming. That meant the WWF couldn't jump to another network if USA made an equal offer to stay. After months of legal wrangling, the courts decided in favor of Viacom and the WWF. Another historic moment occurred on September 25, 2000, when *Raw* debuted on TNN.

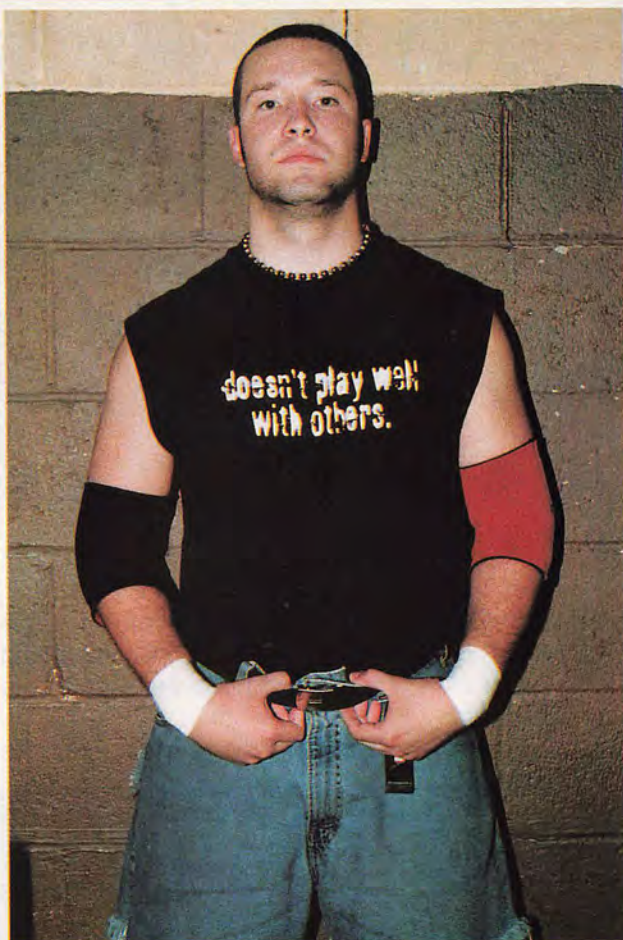


For storyline purposes, Cyrus was TNN's representative to ECW, and everybody in ECW, including Joey Styles, had a problem with him. Realistically, though, not all of TNN's influence on ECW was negative.

What will happen to ECW? WWFE has an exclusivity clause in its contract with Viacom that says rival wrestling companies cannot air on Viacom-owned networks. Vince McMahon waived that exclusivity clause temporarily as a favor to ECW, which will have until January 1, 2001, to find a new home. USA Network and FX are the leading contenders for ECW programming.

Where does all this leave independent promotions? Many indies report that business isn't as profitable as it used to be. The novelty of wrestling is wearing off a bit, with fewer people attending live matches. Most fans are content with watching wrestling, particularly the WWF, on television.

While it's true the WWF is no longer mentioned in the same sentence as WCW, it is mentioned in the same sentence as *Monday Night Football*, *Friends*, and *Frasier*. The startup of WWFE's latest venture, the XFL, will garner even more mainstream attention. And football, well, that's another story. □



"King Of The Independents" Reckless Youth recently returned to the Northeast after a stint with Memphis Championship Wrestling (a WWF developmental territory). It is hoped that his return will bolster a sagging independent scene.



Drew Pearson, Vince McMahon, and Basil DeVito proudly pose for photographers during the XFL's inaugural press conference. It's amazing that a *rasslin'* company is able to financially back a brand new football league.

Whether Steve Austin hits a certain somebody with a stunner will still be important, but wrestling's real headlines will concern the war among the promotions

THE STATE OF THE FUTURE

BOOKER T AS WCW World champion? ECW on The Nashville Network? Wrestling great Mae Young removing her top at the Royal Rumble?

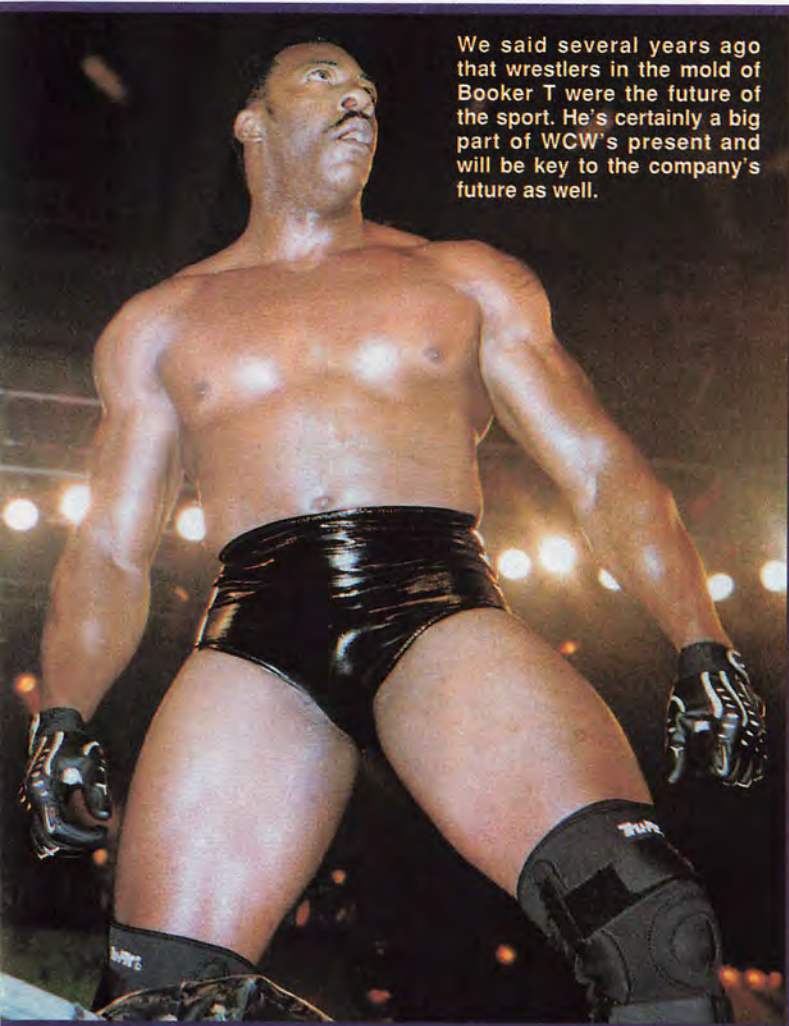
We would have been hard-pressed to make

those predictions in our "State Of The Future" analysis three years ago. We did, however, hail Booker T as the prototypical wrestler of the future, a man who combines mat grappling, high-flying, and brawling into one cohesive style. We never doubted Booker's physical ability to become WCW World champion, but we would have been surprised the political environment in WCW could change so dramatically to grant him that opportunity. We wouldn't have counted on the WWF's head TV writer defecting to WCW, either.

ECW on The Nashville Network? Frankly, the fact that ECW would still be in business in the year 2000 might have surprised some people. Mae Young removing her top? We weren't depraved enough to predict that.

What's on the horizon? The WWF, because of its agreement with Viacom, has a tremendously bright future. Expect more movie deals for WWF superstars, and an action-adventure series produced by WWFE is in the works. Since Viacom owns CBS and UPN, we wouldn't be surprised if The Rock—sporting a colorful Hawaiian shirt—is the star of a new network series next fall. Why not Hawaii as the backdrop? *Rock Of The Islands* would be a great name for the show.

Look for injured and retired XFL players to pursue careers in the WWF. McMahon might pull back on the WWF's physical style to accommodate those ex-players and to protect the wrestlers currently on the roster. The WWF could promote wrestling

A photograph of Booker T, a professional wrestler, standing in a wrestling ring. He is shirtless, wearing black wrestling trunks and black gloves. He is looking upwards and to the left. The background is dark with some lights visible.

We said several years ago that wrestlers in the mold of Booker T were the future of the sport. He's certainly a big part of WCW's present and will be key to the company's future as well.



The Rock was at his finest on the night Mick Foley (as Mankind) paid tribute to him on *Raw* last year. Imagine The Rock in his own weekly TV series. Could happen.

more on the basis of personality, as it has done in the past, rather than intense ring action. The severe injuries suffered by Steve Austin, Mick Foley, Darren Drozdov, and Shawn Michaels might encourage McMahon to adopt a more conservative approach.

Then again, judging from the reactions The Hardy Boyz get from executing reckless move after reckless move, it's hard to imagine that happening. Even Lita, the WWF women's champion, emphasizes high-risk moves in her matches. Lita could do a lot to strengthen women's wrestling in the U.S. She's popular not just because of her looks, but because of her ring skills. Might a lot more great women *wrestlers* get a shot in the WWF in the future?

One thing we know for certain is that Austin's return to the spotlight has already invigorated the WWF. His interactions with The Rock, Triple-H, and Kurt Angle will continue to provide interesting television.

"I've never been involved in a promotion that was as hot as the WWF is right now," said commentator Jerry Lawler. "The Rock and Triple-H have proven they're main-event caliber. After all, they helped carry *WrestleMania* and nearly every pay-per-view we had during the past year. Then we have Chris Benoit and Kurt Angle coming on really strong. Then you take all that and add Steve

Austin to the mix. Wow! The good times are just beginning!"

Unless Time Warner cut its losses by shutting down its wrestling promotion, WCW has a chance to rebound, though we have to wonder why Vince Russo chose to counter the start of the first *Raw* on TNN with a pointless and poorly executed bikini contest. The Monday night ratings gap between *Nitro* and *Raw* became closer in September 2000, with the return of Ric Flair helping WCW bounce up to a 4.1 during one quarter-hour airing just before *Raw*.

Vince Russo has remolded the federation practically from scratch, and some of the characters and storylines he created are beginning to gel. If the rumors are true WCW is indeed sold, however, he might not get a chance to hang around and develop them much further.

The cyclical nature of the business indicates WCW has a chance for recovery ... if it prepares itself for the opportunity. It might not be until after *WrestleMania* 2001, but there will come a time when fans will tire of the WWF. Viewers will grow weary of the WWF if the same old faces start doing the same old things.

That's when some fans, especially viewers who watched *Nitro* in 1996 and '97, might be willing to give WCW a second look. They will see wrestlers with whom they're familiar, such as Booker T, Bill



Goldberg, and Scott Steiner. But they'll see those familiar faces in different situations and circumstances than before. If WCW delivers with entertaining and logical storylines, it could woo some of those viewers back. As long as WCW maintains a national TV presence, it will always have a chance of reclaiming its fans.

One of the reasons the WWF has such a bright future is its abundance of dynamic young stars. Lita and Jeff Hardy (above left) have so much talent, and you're not going to see many bad Chris Jericho-Kurt Angle matches (below left).

"I'm not saying this because I'm a cheerleader for WCW, but I'm excited about the future," said Disco. "We've gone back to our roots, revisited the smaller venues, and the energy level in the buildings is growing. Plus, the main-event

guys have all the charisma they need to get over, and they can really wrestle, too. Imagine that. Guys with personality and wrestling ability. All WCW needs to do is get me some World title shots, then we'll see this company blast off into the stratosphere!"

Although the WWF has the distinct advantage in its war with WCW, expect that gap to narrow. But this one-on-one match could turn into a three-way dance once ECW finds a national cable home to replace its TNN slot. Fox's FX has been mentioned, as well as USA Network, the former home of the WWF.

ECW seems to prefer a show on USA. Speculation continues about an ECW program airing on Saturday nights from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. So far, there has been no official confirmation regarding any offer. Since Paul Heyman covets his cordial relationship with Vince McMahon, he probably wouldn't antagonize him by competing directly against the WWF. Heyman hopes ECW will leapfrog WCW and become wrestling's number-two company.

"Look at the history of ECW," commented former TV champion Kid Kash. "We went from the ECW Arena, to becoming a Northeast promotion, to hav-



Vince Russo has put together some pretty entertaining storylines recently, though the David Flair-Stacy Keibler wedding was a letdown once Ric Flair was booted from the building. Is Russo wrong for WCW?

ing shows across the country, to gaining a spot on national cable TV. Kids all over the world play ECW video games. It's exciting to be part of such a cutting-edge, forward-thinking company."

All promotions should be at least somewhat optimistic about wrestling's future. The WWF has by far the thickest slice of the pie right now, but that doesn't mean WCW and ECW cannot get some decent cuts of their own. Then again, who knows what promotions might be formed in the future? There's always talk of Fox creating its own wrestling company and there are many strong independents, including BET's proposed Urban Wrestling Alliance, Xtreme Pro Wrestling, and various factions of the NWA. With the proper financial backing, any promotion can transform itself into a considerable force.

Competition between individuals is no longer the big story in pro wrestling. Neither is the struggle between rival cliques. Ratings, buy rates, and acquisitions make the main headlines now. What happened to old-fashioned stories about The Midnight Rider? □

Give Paul Heyman a lot of credit for developing exciting new stars. As long as ECW has the money to survive, he'll keep churning out talent like Kid Kash.



THE BUSINESS PAGE

By Harry Burkett

WWF debuts on TNN ... Those who were worried the WWF's jump from USA Network to The National Network on September 27 would hurt *Raw* were relieved when the ratings arrived the next day. *Raw*'s overall rating dropped only 0.2

points, from 5.7 the week before to 5.5. Anticipation of the WWF's inaugural TNN broadcast, which featured the *Raw* return of Steve Austin, made up for any confusion caused by the move.

WCW executives hoped *Raw*'s move would boost *Nitro*'s ratings, but that wasn't the case. *Nitro*'s overall rating went only from 2.8 the week before to 2.9—a negligible difference. WCW remains in the same rut, while the WWF has the benefit of cross-selling its programs between UPN, TNN, and MTV—all three of which are Viacom networks. Before, USA Network frowned upon the WWF's promotion of UPN's *Smackdown* on *Raw*. Now the WWF enjoys the same advantage as WCW, which has cross-promoted between TBS and TNT for years.

Sunday Night Heat, now on MTV, has undergone the most drastic revamping of all the WWF programs. *Heat* now emanates live from WWF New York in Times Square, with the matches being taped the previous Tuesday. While that should increase the business at the WWF's theme restaurant, how will it affect *Heat*'s ratings? Will the addition of two TV veejays, in addi-

tion to Michael Cole and Tazz, appeal to wrestling fans? Will the musical guests be a turn-on for WWF fans? Or will *Heat* become *Livewire* plus music? The ratings will tell the story in the coming months.

ECW's stay of execution ...

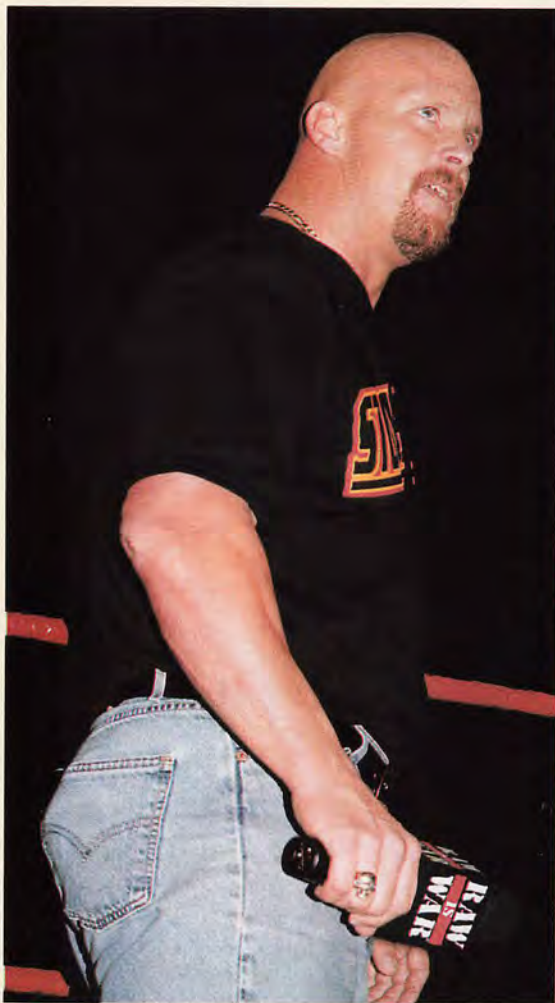
Paul Heyman and ECW were granted a reprieve from the governor. Well, not the governor, but WWF Chairman Vince McMahon. September 22 was supposed to be the final broadcast of *ECW On TNN*, due to an exclusivity clause in the WWF's contract with Viacom. That means no rival wrestling companies can air programs on Viacom networks. McMahon temporarily waived that clause, allowing *ECW On TNN* to continue until the end of the year or until ECW found another cable home, whichever came first.

What is behind McMahon's uncharacteristic benevolence? He might view the promotion as a farm team for the WWF. He might consider a stronger ECW more of a threat to WCW. A battle between ECW and WCW would allow McMahon to concentrate on other matters, including WWF's growing list of outside interests.

Regardless of McMahon's motives, it's a win-win situation for ECW.

Bischoff, Round 3? Eric Bischoff might be back at the helm of WCW one more time, only his paychecks could have a different signature on them. At press time, Bischoff was brokering a deal whereby Los Angeles-based Mandalay Sports would purchase World Championship Wrestling from Time Warner.

Bischoff withdrew from the public eye in July, following the controversial exit of Hulk Hogan at Bash at the Beach. His disappearance fueled speculation that Bischoff, Hogan, and several other exiled stars would form a "rival" promotion to WCW, with TBS' *Thunder* as its base. That didn't happen. Yet wrestlers such as Hogan, Randy Savage, Curt Hennig,



"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin's return at Unforgiven was expected to pop the pay-per-view's buy rate. We know his return to *Raw* on the show's first night on TNN helped sustain the WWF's ratings dominance over WCW.

Dallas Page, and Scott Hall—all of whom are friendly with Bischoff—could return to a Mandalay-owned WCW.

Would Time Warner forego its once-lucrative wrestling franchise? Considering WCW's mountain of debt, it probably would—even if it meant swallowing its current debt and selling the company to Mandalay debt-free. That way, Time Warner's anticipated merger with America Online wouldn't be hindered by the prospect of future WCW red ink.

WCW employees, in some respects, should hope Mandalay's acquisition doesn't take place. If Mandalay buys WCW, TNT and TBS have no more commitment to WCW programming than its other shows. Time Warner would no longer have a vested interest in making the company successful. If ratings dip even further under Bischoff, TNT and TBS might not hesitate to dump WCW programming.

All of this could leave Vince Russo without a job. The predicted rift between Russo and Bischoff has already happened, and it's doubtful that Russo would remain as creative director if Bischoff were in complete control. That might explain why Russo is pushing himself as an on-air character, to enhance his value to the WWF if he becomes unemployed. How about Jason Hervey as creative director?

The WWF's latest lawsuit ... It seems there's always one ongoing, doesn't it? WWFE filed suit against the William Morris Agency on October 2. The William Morris Agency, perhaps the most famous talent agency in Hollywood, is responsible for placing WWF superstars in various film and TV roles.

According to WWFE, the company is suing the Morris Agency for fraudulent business practices. Apparently, the Morris Agency believed it was entitled to a share of the profits from ventures for which it wasn't directly responsible, such as the XFL. The suit was filed in federal court in the Southern District of New York.

For now, Justin Credible will be fighting foes like Tommy Dreamer on TNN. WWF Chairman Vince McMahon waved the WWF's exclusivity clause with TNN to allow ECW to remain on the network for the time being.



WWFE STOCKWATCH

(For the period of September 1-30)

30-Day High: 22½ on September 5 and 14

30-Day Low: 14 on September 28

52-Week High: 34

52-Week Low: 9¾

While Wall Street had expected WWFE to announce a shortfall in licensing revenue for this fiscal year (ending April 30, 2001), experts thought the WWF's higher ticket prices, strong attendance, and overall revenue from its house show and television ventures would compensate for the difference.

None of that was quite enough.

According to Dow Jones, WWFE attributed the potential shortfall to slower-than-expected sales of older toy products and its decrease in estimated revenues from its joint venture with the National Hot Rod Association. The WWF's problems with the NHRA were blamed on "management issues."

The lifeblood of WWFE, the World Wrestling Federation, continues to flourish. In addition to its increased ticket revenues, pay-per-view buy rates are even higher. Steve Austin's return, and potential matches against The Rock and Triple-H, should cause those numbers to rise higher still.

The outcry from the Parents Television Council is having some effect. Sponsor withdrawals will cost WWFE approximately \$2-million per quarter. However, the graphic nature of WWF programming that has led to the outcry may be directly responsible for its increasing PPV business. That, in the final analysis, more than makes up for it.

Wall Street remains optimistic about the XFL's effect on WWFE profits. WWFE anticipates \$80-million in revenue during the XFL's first year and \$110-million the following year, CBS Marketwatch reported. Again, revenues from the XFL alone make the loss of advertising revenue seem minuscule in comparison.

News of WWFE's projected shortfall sent stock tumbling from \$19.75 to \$14 per share on September 28.

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS (Note: Each ratings point represents 750,000 households.)

SEPTEMBER 4

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
<i>Raw</i>	—	—	—	—	3.9	4.6	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	4.2
<i>Nitro</i>	2.6	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.8	—	—	—	—	—	3.6

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: Before WWFE stockholders start jumping out of windows, keep in mind that *Raw* aired at 11 p.m. Eastern time—rather than its usual 9 p.m.—because of the U.S. Open. *Nitro*, which aired unopposed in the East, still failed to match *Raw*'s numbers. If children weren't going back

to school that week, *Raw*'s rating might have been higher. Technically, *Nitro*'s "War Games" contest for Kevin Nash's WCW World title beat *Raw*'s main event of WWF tag champs Edge and Christian vs. WWF World champion The Rock and The Undertaker, 4.8 to 4.0.

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER 11

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
<i>Raw</i>	—	—	—	—	5.0	4.9	5.7	5.5	6.3	6.0	6.0	6.2	6.8	5.8 (5.3*)
<i>Nitro</i>	2.8	3.3	3.5	4.1	3.1	3.1	2.4	3.0	—	—	—	—	—	3.2 (2.9*)

*Head-to-head composite

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: WCW employed a smart strategy this week. Following two weeks of being unopposed in the East, WCW capitalized on the strength of its "War Games" main event from the previous week to offer the near-wedding of David Flair and Stacy Keibler. Not that weddings are neces-

sarily ratings-getters, but the prospect of Ric Flair's return sparked the ratings to 4.1 before *Raw* went on the air, and *Nitro* maintained a respectable 3.1 in the next two segments. *Raw* did a strong overrun, which pitted Chris Benoit and Kane vs. WWF champ The Rock and The Undertaker.

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER 18

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
<i>Raw</i>	—	—	—	—	5.1	5.7	5.8	5.5	6.1	6.1	6.1	5.2	5.9	5.7 (5.5*)
<i>Nitro</i>	2.7	3.4	3.3	3.5	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.6	—	—	—	—	—	2.8 (2.3*)

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: *Raw* was cruising in its second hour, reaching 6.1 in three consecutive quarter-hours before, suddenly, the rating dropped to 5.2. It happened during a Mick Foley promo and the start of The Rock vs. The Undertaker—the usual components of a hot segment. One explanation might be a quick

switch to *Monday Night Football*. Fans switched back to Rock-Undertaker, returning *Raw* to 5.9. *Nitro* dropped to 2.0 in 6Q, when Jeff Jarrett and Scott Steiner were featured. Explanation: Kronik and The Natural Born Thrillers were featured in that segment as well.

THE MONDAY NIGHT NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER 25

	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	5Q	6Q	7Q	8Q	9Q	10Q	11Q	12Q	OR	Composite
<i>Raw</i>	—	—	—	—	4.8	5.5	5.3	4.9	6.2	6.0	5.4	5.3	5.9	5.5 (5.1*)
<i>Nitro</i>	2.7	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.1	2.2	2.1	2.7	—	—	—	—	—	2.9 (2.5*)

Tuesday Morning Quarterback: This was the inaugural broadcast of *Raw* on TNN. *Raw* maintained most of its audience, despite the relatively little time afforded the WWF and TNN to hype the change following a final court decision that allowed the WWF to leave USA

Network. *Raw* did well, although *Martial Law* offered a weak lead-in of 1.1, compared to USA's *Nash Bridges* and *Walker, Texas Ranger*, which had delivered ratings around 1.7 and 2.3, respectively. Booker T-Vince Russo scored a typical *Nitro* main event rating of 2.7.

OTHER BIG THREE NETWORK & CABLE SHOWS

(For the weeks of September 2, 9, 16, and 23, respectively)

WWF

Smackdown (UPN): 5.0, 4.7, 4.9, 4.7 (broadcast ratings)

Sunday Night Heat (USA): 1.8, 2.8, 2.8, 2.6

Livewire (USA): 1.5, 1.3, 1.1, 1.2

Superstars (USA): 1.4, 1.3, 1.2, 1.5

ECW

ECW On TNN: 1.0, 1.0, 0.8, 0.8

WCW

Thunder (TBS): 1.9, 2.4, 2.6, 2.5

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the steel cage

By Dave Rosenbaum

OUT OF THE ORDINARY. This month, I present a special multimedia edition of "The Steel Cage," in which I'll explore the outside-the-ring goings-on of some of

your favorite wrestlers and federations. If you're interested in reading about wrestling this month, I suggest you turn to page 14 and read Lenker's column.

Wrestling fans saw Chyna in her dainties at Backlash in April, but her pictorial in *Playboy* is even more revealing. While promoting the magazine on Howard Stern, Chyna revealed she's living with Stephanie McMahon's "husband," Triple-H.

Bigamy in wrestling? Chyna appeared on Howard Stern's radio show this fall. Stern and sidekick Robin Quivers teased Chyna about her manly appearance and asked her what box was checked next to "sex" on her birth certificate. Chyna, though, took it all in stride as she tried to promote her appearance in *Playboy*. During the interview, she said she has tried to pressure Triple-H into getting married, but he has resisted.

Well, of course he has resisted! He's married to Stephanie McMahon! Hasn't Chyna been paying attention to her own federation?

Triple-H can't be married to both Stephanie and Chyna. That's called bigamy, and it's only legal in Utah (and parts of the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia).

Okay, this is an aspect of the WWF that interests me very much: Triple-H is married to Stephanie while he's living with Chyna. No wonder Stephanie has her eyes on Kurt Angle! She's obviously not getting much attention from Triple-H.

If somebody can figure out what's going on, please let me know.

Pro wrestlers appearing in more movies. Buff Bagwell, who has starred in the movies *The Day Of The Warrior* and *Return To Savage Beach*, will appear in *Terror Tract*, a straight-to-cable movie. What that usually means is that the movie is so bad that even the producers can't imagine anyone paying real money to see it in a theater. But because the standards for cable-TV (especially USA Network) are much lower, the producers opt immediately for the easy money. In other wrestler/movie news, Universal will reportedly pay The Rock \$5.5-million to star in *The Scorpion King*. Vince McMahon will produce the movie.

Uh-oh. Suddenly, I'm having horrible flashbacks about *No Holds Barred*, the Hulk Hogan-McMahon dreck of a decade ago.



My goodness, why in the world do producers keep paying good money to have pro wrestlers in their movies? What in the world ever gave them the idea that these people can act?

So, I'm just wondering: Is it possible to make a list of the top five movies ever in which a pro wrestler had a prominent role? I'm figuring *The Princess Bride*, starring Andre the Giant, has to be at the top of the list, but what can you say about a genre in which such films as *Paradise Alley* and the god-awful *Road House* (both starring Terry Funk) might make the list?

Okay, readers, let's give this a shot. I'd like your list of the top five movies of all-time in which a pro wrestler had a starring role. Send your lists to: "Five Best Movies," Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

I'm interested only in mainstream movies, not highlight videos of the wrestlers. If you're confused about the difference between those two categories, then please do not participate in this survey. And please wake up.

WCW closes the Nitro Grill. This is incredibly annoying. Let me tell you why: About a year ago, I was in Las Vegas (bad move), stayed at the Excalibur Hotel (worse move), and ate at the Nitro Grill (even worse move). It was a Wednesday night. The restaurant was about as empty as Nassau Coliseum for a WCW card. The food was okay. The prices were ridiculous.

Ready To Rumble, featuring David Arquette, Bill Goldberg, and a ton of other WCW wrestlers, was the latest wrestling-themed movie to flop. Dave Rosenbaum is worried about The Rock's burgeoning movie career.

Well, while I was eating dinner, I kept thinking, *I'm going to have to write about this place when I get back*. But the rest of my trip was so bad that I forgot all about my \$30 bill for pork chops, iced tea, and dessert. In fact, I had forgotten about it until WCW announced the closing of the restaurant.

"We appreciate our supportive fans in Las Vegas and the Sitka Restaurant Group," said Alan Sharp, WCW director of public relations. "Since our license agreement has expired, we have decided to seek new creative avenues to maximize the WCW brand."

The only reason I'm writing this is to let you know that if the Nitro Grill ever reopens somewhere, bring a lot of money if you decide to dine there. The other reason I'm writing this is to warn you about restaurants owned by wrestling federations: As a general rule, if the federation is tough, the food is tougher.

The closing of the Nitro Grill is the best news to come out of WCW

in a long time.

Now if only somebody would do something about Las Vegas and the Excalibur. ☐



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Superplex
Gut Wrench Suplex
Hurricarana
Insuguri Kick
Swinging Neckbreaker

Pederson Roll
Spinning Heel Kick
Side Russian Leg Sweep
Tiltawhirl Backbreaker

FINISHER HOLDS:

Butterfly Superplex
Chokeslam
Shooting Star Press
Top Rope Hurricarana

Texas Cloverleaf
Super Bomb

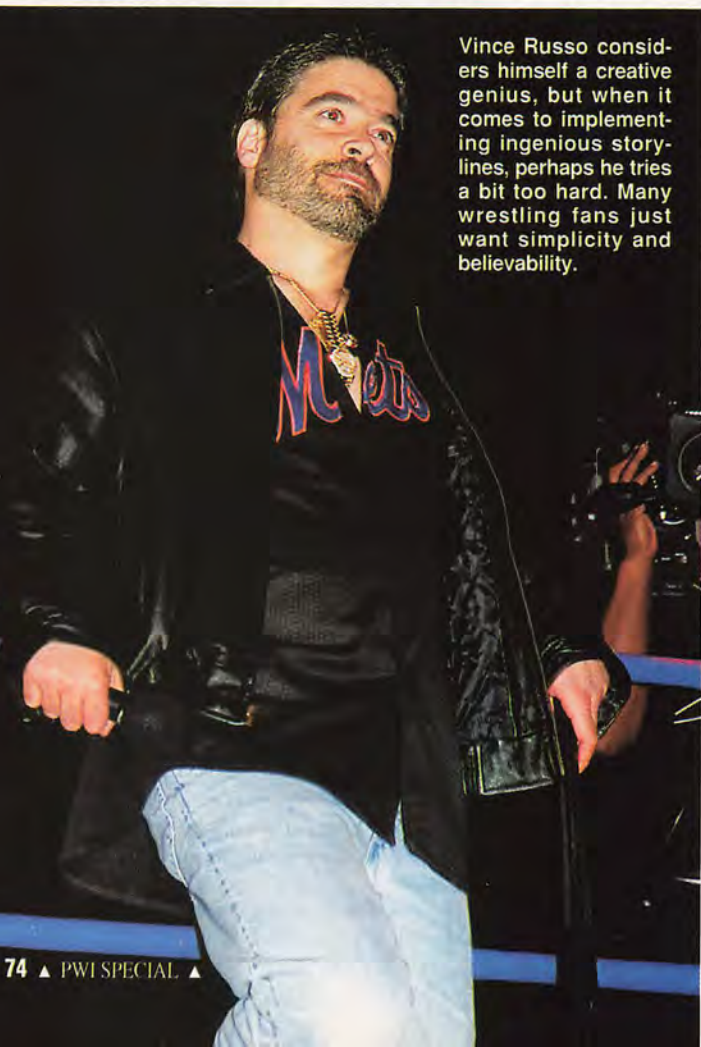
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Jawbreaker Cutter
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win or lose draw

By Harry Burkett

REMEMBER THIS INCIDENT? Bill Goldberg stalked Vince Russo for two hours, kidnapped him, and drove him to a freshly dug hole in the New Mexico desert. Goldberg dragged Russo to the hole as Bret Hart



Vince Russo considers himself a creative genius, but when it comes to implementing ingenious storylines, perhaps he tries a bit too hard. Many wrestling fans just want simplicity and believability.

emerged to lend a hand. Hart muttered something about Russo "screwing with his life" and "screwing with his family." It looked as if Goldberg had an accomplice in this criminal act.

Wham! Hart smacked the back of Goldberg's bald head with a shovel. Hart yelled at Goldberg, blaming him for his head injury and ruining his career. Clearly, this was a setup. Forget the legal ramifications of attempted homicide and the fact that he wasn't very dirty from digging such a large hole.

But who was setting up whom? Didn't Goldberg almost knock Hart's head off his shoulders? Why would he tell Hart about his homicidal scheme? Did Russo somehow know Goldberg would be digging a hole for him in the New Mexico desert and arrange for Hart to fly from Calgary and become Goldberg's ally? Or did Hart suggest the hole-digging in the New Mexico desert just so he could hit Goldberg with a shovel? Or was it the evil cameraman who played all of these WCW superstars like pawns? Was a Humvee parked nearby?

Most of today's wrestling setups are too complicated for their own good. I'm thinking of the Greater Power scheme in which Vince McMahon fooled his entire family into thinking he was an enemy of The Undertaker. Vince stood by as The Undertaker and his Ministry of Darkness kidnapped Stephanie. It remains unclear at which point Vince and Undertaker actually became allies in that scheme. This Byzantine series of events was orchestrated to dupe Steve Austin. All I really remember about the Greater Power scheme is the maniacal expression on Vince's face when he pulled his hood off. I don't recall Steve Austin's career being set back in any way.

It's the Lex Luthor Syndrome. No, I'm not talking about "The Total Package." You know, Lex Luthor, Superman's arch-enemy. If Lex Luthor left his suitcase at home, he was the kind of guy who would concoct a way to rotate the earth backward and reverse time to begin his day over again—instead of just driving back home to get it.

The best-laid schemes are the ones that can be planned by a five-year-old. The ingenuity lies in the simplicity.

Russo, McMahon, and the other evil geniuses should peruse their wrestling history books for the components of a good scheme. A setup should take only a few minutes, not a few weeks or months. Here are three case studies from the archives.

The "Mister, You've Got A Phone Call" Trick. This happened in 1982 on *Mid-Atlantic Championship Wrestling*, which aired from a television studio instead of an arena. Unless you're from Memphis, you might not know what I'm talking about. Jerry Brisco, a fan favorite, was wrestling a preliminary wrestler in the "feature match." In those days, feature matches were just as bad as the other ones, except they were the show's last matches.

Anyway, Jack Brisco was doing color commentary

at the podium with host Bob Caudle. A production guy whispered something in Caudle's ear, and the weatherman-turned-wrestling broadcaster told Jack that he had a phone call. Ah, those TV studio days. Can you imagine someone interrupting *Nitro* to tell Mark Madden he had a phone call? Somehow, it didn't seem strange in those days.

Jack left to answer the phone call as Jerry locked his opponent in a figure-four leglock. Suddenly, Roddy Piper burst through the backdoor exit to the studio, climbed to the top turnbuckle, and dove onto Brisco's knee, which was still intertwined in the leglock. Jack Brisco rushed into the ring as his brother screamed in agony, holding his knee. Caudle yelled, "It was a trick! It was Roddy Piper! It was a trick! It was Roddy Piper!"

What a setup. It was sophisticated in its simplicity.

The Masked Man Bait And Switch. Here's another from the TV studio days, a 1984 edition of Georgia's *World Championship Wrestling* to be exact. National champion Ted DiBiase had defeated Tommy Rich in a loser-leaves-town match by foul means. A note for younger fans: When wrestlers lost loser-leaves-town matches unfairly, they were given a wink and a nod when they returned wearing masks to avenge their losses. That was wrestling's equivalent to TV drama's "accused of crimes he didn't commit" cliché.

Of course, Rich returned as the masked Mr. R. DiBiase was forced to defend his belt against Mr. R on television. DiBiase was about to finish off Mr. R when, to everyone's surprise, Tommy Rich joined Gordon Solie at the podium and gave DiBiase a little wave. DiBiase's mouth flew open as Mr. R schoolboyed him, scored the pinfall, and won the National title. An enraged DiBiase ripped off Mr. R's mask, revealing Brad Armstrong.

That was the classic bait and switch, with some conspiracy as a nice touch.

The Steel Cage Mouse Trap. The Dusty Rhodes-Kevin Sullivan feud was the ultimate battle of good vs. evil. Rhodes hired Sullivan as his personal trainer to help him lose a few pounds. Since Sullivan was obviously unsuccessful at that venture, he turned against "The American Dream," and the Rhodes-Sullivan feud raged throughout Florida between 1982 and '84.

Sullivan brainwashed many top stars into joining his cult, including Jake Roberts and Buzz Sawyer. The most prominent member was Mark Lewin, who, ironically, was a teen wrestling idol in the 1960s. Under Sullivan's spell, he became "The Purple Haze." Rhodes was thrilled when he was scheduled to wrestle Lewin in a cage, because that would keep Sullivan from interfering. The Rhodes-Lewin battle was predictably gory, but Rhodes gained the upper hand. Sensing victory, Rhodes hammered Lewin in the corner.

Few fans saw it, but a sharp object penetrated the can-

vas from below. There was a ripping, then a sawing motion. Someone was cutting a hole, about two feet in diameter, from below the mat. Then, suddenly, a head broke through the mat and popped into the ring. Sullivan could be seen only from the neck up, but you could tell it was him in all his evil glory.



vas from below. There was a ripping, then a sawing motion. Someone was cutting a hole, about two feet in diameter, from below the mat. Then, suddenly, a head broke through the mat and popped into the ring. Sullivan could be seen only from the neck up, but you could tell it was him in all his evil glory.

Rhodes didn't notice Sullivan until it was too late. Sullivan and Lewin stomped on Dusty until he was a helpless mass on the canvas. He was carried from the ring on a stretcher.

This setup was heinous, but it was executed perfectly. It didn't need an exotic locale, outside cameras, or ego-maniacal non-wrestlers. I hope Russo will remember that the next time he drives through the New Mexico desert. □

THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER

By Dan Murphy

THE ASSIGNMENT WAS to find out what I could about Mikey Whipwreck's bizarre mentor, The Sinister Minister—to find out what the devilish one is trying to accomplish in ECW. As I page through the charred notes I managed to rescue from our interview, I can't honestly tell if I accomplished that objective or not.

The man known as The Sinister Minister has confused wrestling fans his whole career. The former carnival barker and fortune teller first surfaced in Smoky Mountain Wrestling under the name of Darryl Van Horn. Back then, he was leading around what he claimed was a 3,000-year-old wrestling mummy, Prince Kharis. In one segment, he even cut off one of the "mummy's" fingers and laughed with glee as sand poured out of the wound.

There weren't too many wrestling fans mourning when SMW buried Prince Kharis, and his fast-talking manager quickly went underground. He resurfaced a couple years later in WCW, this time as James Vandenburg, a collector of exotic things and sworn enemy of Glacier. Vandenburg managed to acquire the services of both Mortis (Chris Canyon) and Wrath (Bryan Clark), but he did little else. At the time, the NWO/WCW war was the storyline around which the company revolved. The entire "Blood Runs Cold" gimmick just faded away, and a short time later, Vandenburg disappeared from ringside.

Eventually, The Sinister Minister showed up in ECW. By now, people

saw the Minister as a traveling flim-flam man. He'd show up in one territory, con a few wrestlers desperate for their big break into signing with him, then give them a bizarre image makeover and blame management and run when the whole thing failed.

The Minister agreed to meet with me backstage at the Burt Flickinger Center after a TV taping in Buffalo, New York. Mikey Whipwreck accompanied us as we sat down in a classroom in the adjoining community college. Finally, someone could nail this guy down and get a few answers. I opened by asking him why he jumped to ECW.

"My three years in WCW caused me to do some deep introspection, and I had a religious epiphany of sorts," the Minister said, stroking his goatee. Mikey had dropped to the floor and was looking for gum stuck on the underside of the desks. Finding some, he pried it loose, giggled, and tossed it into his mouth. I turned my attention back to the Minister.

"Since you showed up in ECW, you've done all but come out and say you were the Devil himself, though you've certainly

hinted as much," I began. I was interrupted as the Minister's cell phone sounded. He silenced me with a wave. All I could think was, *Figures that the Devil has a cell phone.* Minister answered the call and began carrying on an animated conversation in Japanese. After a few minutes, he said *sayonara* and apologized to me.

"Our good friend Tajiri has run into some—shall we say—troubles in Japan," Minister said. His voice was syrupy and condescending. "We have smoothed things over. Now, you were saying?"

I felt like he was trying to play me. Since when can The Sinister



In an effort to find out what's going with The Sinister Minister and Mikey Whipwreck, we sent intrepid Senior Writer Dan Murphy to Buffalo. What Murphy discovered about the duo was more than a little disturbing.

Minister speak Japanese? What kind of problem could Tajiri have in Japan that the Minister could fix in a couple of minutes over the phone? The Minister was trying to inflate his aura of omniscience. I played along.

"What qualifies you to be a manager?" I asked. "What do you have to offer to Mikey and Yoshihiro Tajiri?"

"I have managed some of the most evil men this sport has ever seen. I have

brought out the truly ugly in the most innocent. Just look at what I've done for Mikey." Whipwreck was squatting by a file cabinet with a lighter in his hand, trying to lure a spider out from his web. "I took Mikey and Tajiri to the tag title. We hit a bit of a snag when the FBI managed to win them the following night, I admit."

"So what of all the Devil-speak?" I questioned. "If it was to get the fans to boo you, it hasn't worked. Mikey teamed with Mahoney and Chilly Willy tonight, and you guys got one of the biggest crowd reactions of the night."

"All the great leaders have cloaked themselves in religious trappings," Minister said. "Look at Jim Jones and David Koresh. My personal icon is the snake below, but he's not the fire and brimstone guy with horns and a pitchfork that most people imagine him to be. He's the kind of guy who would get you drunk on martinis and then sell you a used car."

I was getting frustrated. Minister wasn't *telling* me anything. Instead, he was trying to sell me a bill of goods. He had no intention of discussing wrestling or his qualifications to be a manager. He wanted to play the morality game and disguise



The Sinister Minister and Whipwreck cackle in glee after setting Dan Murphy's interview notes on fire. The Murph, staring down the Minister after watching all his hard work go up in flames, was at a loss.

his true intentions. I asked one more question, hoping I'd get a response. I needed something that would take him off his game.

"So after 11 years in the business—with a one-day major title reign thrown in there—I guess it makes sense that you can only sign wrestlers after either brainwashing them or taking advantage of the fact they don't speak English. How much longer before you take Mikey and Tajiri's money and run somewhere else?"

Minister regarded me with an icy stare. Slowly, a grin crept across his face, and as he erupted with a deep cackle, his grin widened into a toothy smile. I suddenly felt very nervous. "Oh, Mr. Murphy, you're such a hoot," Minister laughed. "It's so refreshing to see such a pure, naive soul again. Mr. Murphy, I thank you for your time. This interview has reaffirmed my faith in the basic stupidity of man." The Minister tapped his freakishly long fingernails twice on his desktop. All of a sudden I smelled—lighter fluid? There was a bright flash, and I blinked hard as heat hit my face. When I opened my eyes, I saw my notebook on fire, with Mikey standing at my side, lighter in hand.

Mikey threw a fireball at my notebook!

The Minister cackled as I stared in mute amazement at the flames. "Mr. Murphy, I greatly look forward to our next meeting," Minister said, "wherever it may be." □

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THE Wrestling

A N A L Y S T

THE SANDMAN

Years Pro: 11

Size: 6'3", 244

"PWI 500" Listings: 2000—86

1999—91

1998—96

1997—69

1996—65

1995—60

1994—160

1993—161

1992—256

1991—433

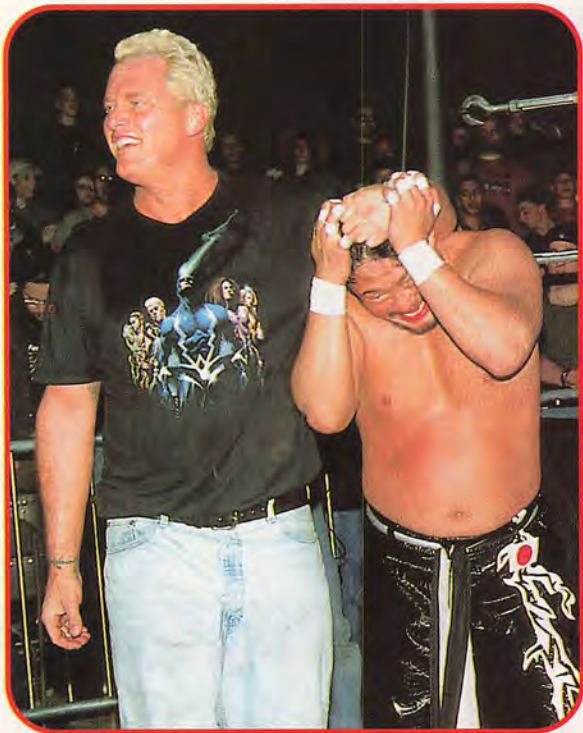
Titles: ECW heavyweight (4 times)

ECW tag team

PWI Awards: Match of the Year:

3rd runner-up (1997)

THE NUMBERS



- ① Sandman's offensive game plan consists of little more than a two-fisted assault on his opponents, but this simple attack has served him well throughout his ECW career.

- ② The Sandman has a soft physique and a crude approach to the sport, but his legendary toughness allows him to hang with hungry young challengers like Rhino.



Offense (9.5): The Sandman commands the pace of his matches. From the opening bell, when The Sandman beats his foe with his Singapore cane, to his introduction of ladders later in the bout, he absolutely forces his opponent to wrestle his hardcore style.

Defense (8.0): There are only two modes of combat for Sandman: beating and getting beaten. For him, there are no games of cat and mouse, no complicated reversals of holds, and no jousts of leverage. Too many times, he uses low blows to get out of tough situations.

Experience (9.5): Besides Jack Victory, Sandman is the most experienced wrestler in ECW. He hasn't applied much of his gained experience to his in-ring style, but he is a master of unconventional mind games. His dramatic entrances and precision-timed rescues are proof.

Conditioning (7.5): That isn't a 12-pack he's hiding under his shirt. It's his beer gut. The Sandman embraces his image as a beer-guzzling, chain-smoking son of a gun. He'd rather look like a construction worker than a wrestler, anyway. It fits the image he has created for himself.

Science (7.0): He prefers longnecks over neckbreakers, and it's evident in his wrestling style. The Sandman treats every match like a barroom brawl, and that has served him well in ECW. Imagine how much better he'd fare with a dreaded submission finisher.

Stamina (7.0): Going for 10 consecutive minutes is his idea of an ironman match. His chain smoking limits his oxygen reserves, and his lungs are often struggling for air after five minutes of intense in-ring action. Too much prematch alcohol has made him nauseous in the ring on occasion.

Power (8.5): The Sandman is larger than the average ECW competitor. That usually gives him a strength advantage. That has not been the case during his series of matches against Rhino, who employs an equally bruising style. Sandman and his wife have eaten a lot of wood in the last year.

Speed (8.0): Nagging back and knee injuries have slowed Sandman considerably over the years. He often compensates with extreme lunging motions in the ring. In tag team competition, for example, he'll drop and roll to his partner's corner rather than sprint for it.

Ability To Absorb Punishment (10.0): The Sandman might be the toughest man in the sport, at least in terms of sheer will. Sandman's critics suggest he is often too drunk to submit, but long-time allies of the blue-collar competitor know differently. Sandman has enormous pride.

Quality Of Opposition (8.5): He failed in his attempts to defeat ECW TV champion Rhino and isn't given much of a chance against World champion Justin Credible, Rob Van Dam, or even Jerry Lynn. But Sandman doesn't run from a fight, either, and that's why fans respect him.



③ Although he could never match Yoshihiro Tajiri hold-for-hold, Sandman could try to wear him down over the course of a long match. Sandman is much heavier than he looks, but lacks the conditioning to go far beyond the 10-minute mark.

THE ANALYSIS

Repertoire: He was the right man at the right time. No other wrestler personifies the ECW hardcore revolution like The Sandman. He has mercilessly whipped countless opponents with his Singapore cane, delivered stunners from the tops of ladders, and sprayed his more persistent foes with fire extinguishers. And chair shots come to him as naturally as breathing.

Strengths: The Sandman is consistent. He has placed in the "PWI 500" every year of its existence, which is a remarkable feat considering this is a man who has made a career of working for struggling promotions and wrestling through his own injuries. He's basically the same wrestler he was as *Mr. Sandman*, when he carried that hokey surf-board.

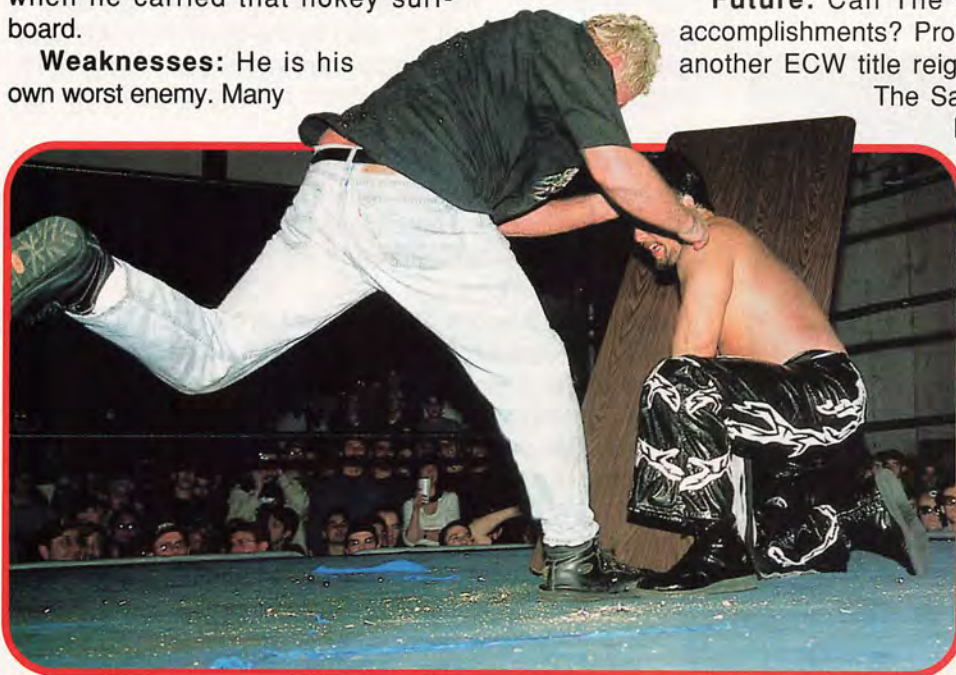
Weaknesses: He is his own worst enemy. Many

of his moves require him to take almost as much punishment as his opponent. Consider his suplexes against ladders, dives through tables, and legdrops from the ring apron. His primary attention-getter—smashing a beer can against his forehead until he bleeds—demonstrates a sick attraction to self-inflicted pain.

Defining Career Moment: The Sandman enjoyed his hottest year in 1995, and that streak began on April 15, when he defeated Shane Douglas for the ECW title. He held the championship for six months and was a primary reason for the skyrocketing attendance at ECW Arena. Mikey Whipwreck upset him for the belt on October 28 of that year.

Future: Can The Sandman surpass his past accomplishments? Probably not. That doesn't mean another ECW title reign is completely out of reach.

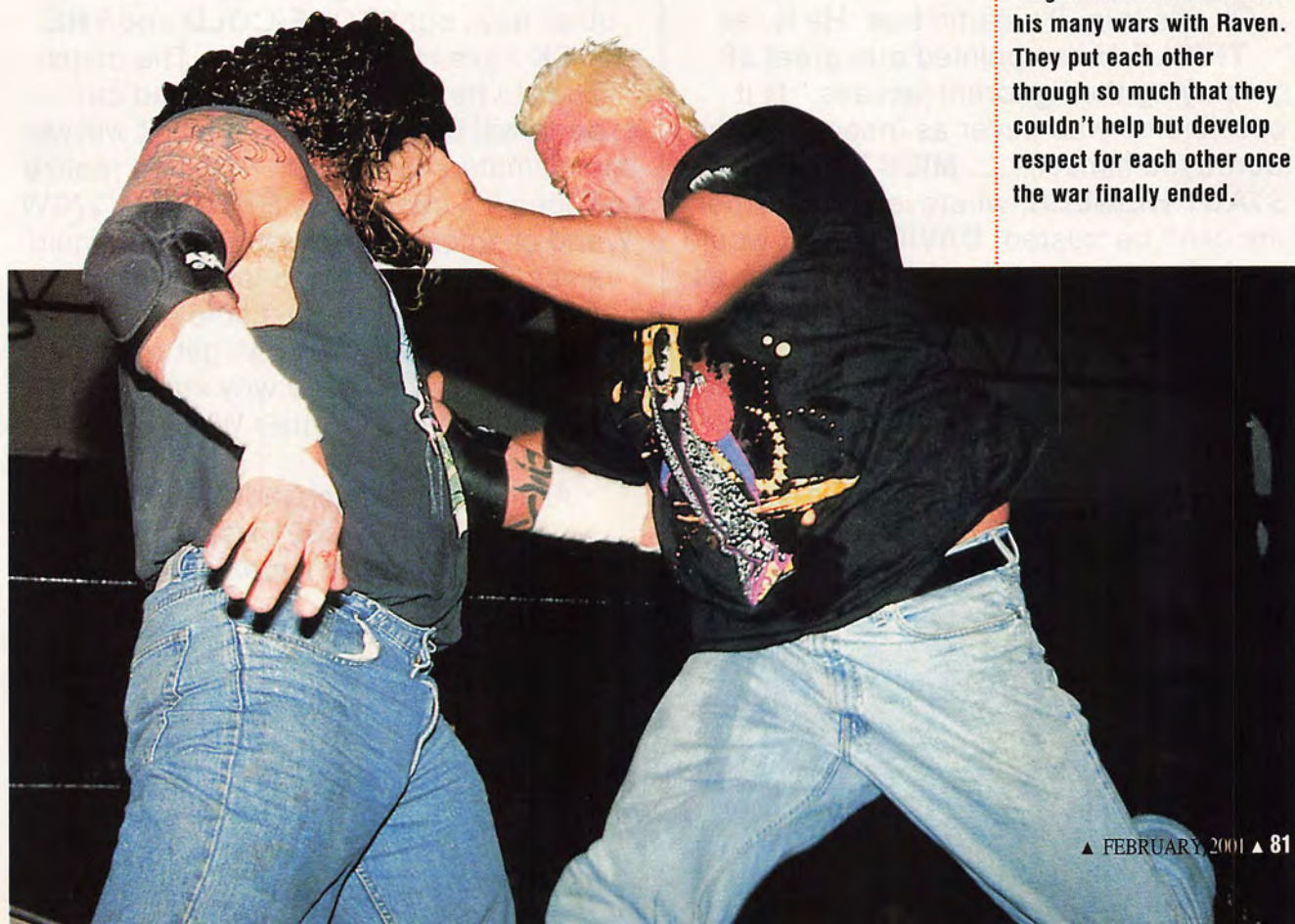
The Sandman would like to hold the ECW title again, especially since it is now recognized as a legitimate world championship. He isn't likely to rest on his reputation as a hardcore icon for long. No one will let him.



④ Pounding on an opponent works well for The Sandman, but some critics maintain that "The Hardcore Icon" would have even greater success in ECW if he possessed an effective finisher.

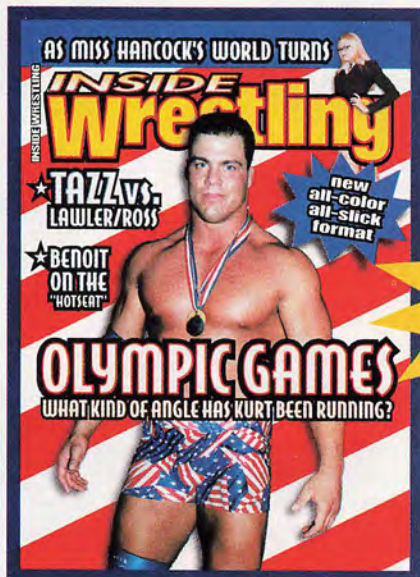


- ⑤ The Sandman became a tougher man as a result of his many wars with Raven. They put each other through so much that they couldn't help but develop respect for each other once the war finally ended.



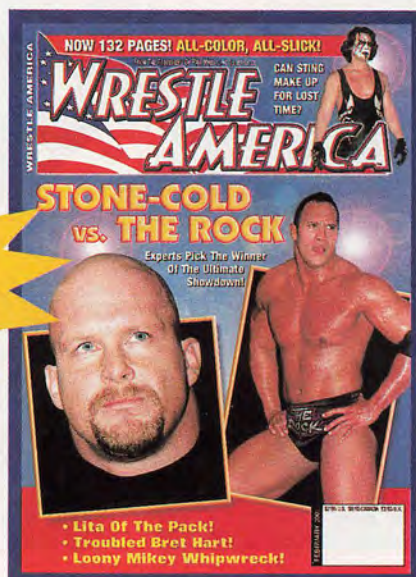
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All this—and much more!—in the January 2001 issue of *Inside Wrestling*

They might be acting friendly toward each other now, but **STONE-COLD** and **THE ROCK** have to go at it again. The match *has* to be made sometime, and our experts will tell you who they think will win this ultimate showdown! ... Do you realize how long it's been since **STING** was WCW World champion? He hasn't held the gold since October! Is it too late for him to make up for all this lost time? ... The lovely **LITA**—none of us can get enough of her. We'll let you know why she's more woman than any other WWF diva!

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Cactus Jack
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Steven Richards
Tazz "FTW"
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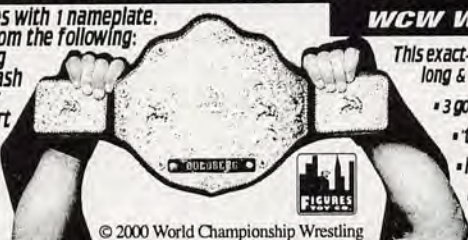
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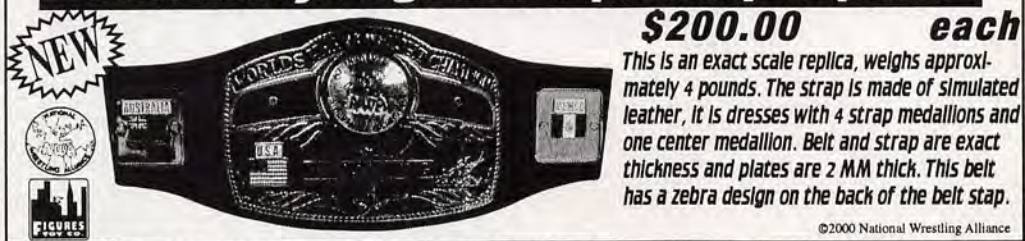
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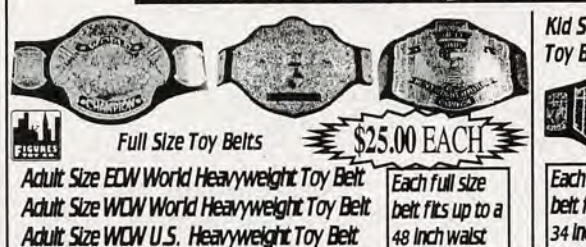
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12 Questions

You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd *never* think of asking

WITH PAUL HEYMAN

What did the "E" in Paul E. Dangerously stand for?

Everything your mind could imagine, conjure up, and fantasize about.

What's the key to living a long, healthy, and rewarding life?

Do as Paul Heyman says, not as Paul Heyman does.

What's your idea of a quiet, relaxing night at home?

Sitting in the backyard in my hammock while getting a hot oil massage from a beautiful deaf mute. And if ECW gets even more successful, two beautiful, bisexual deaf mutes.

What's something that nobody knows about Joey Styles?

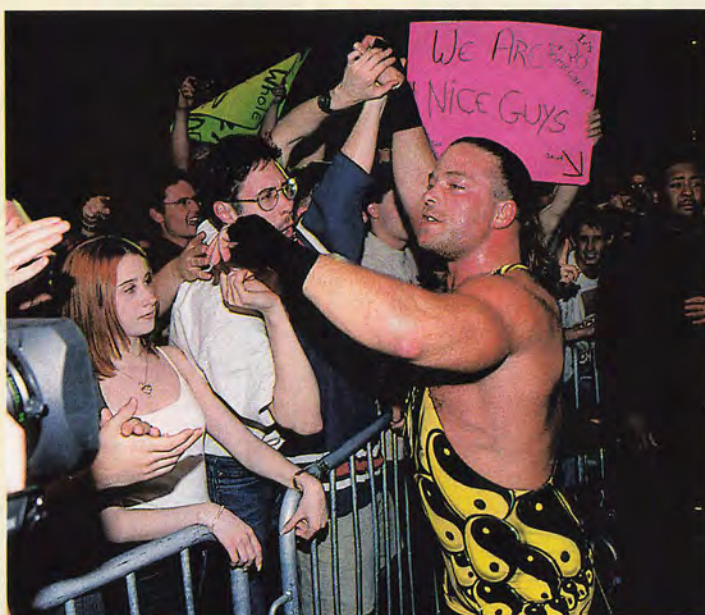
Behind closed doors in the studio, he likes to wear Joel Gertner's underwear.

Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and say, "Damn, I'm out of ideas!"

I never sleep in the middle of the night.

Have you had enough of taking reporters' phone calls at 2 o'clock in the morning?

I prefer 2 a.m. rather than 2 p.m. Either way, you had better wrap this interview up before the sun comes up.



"In my mind, Rob Van Dam is wrestling."

When Rob Van Dam leaves wrestling, will he retire to a far-away mountain top like all the other great Zen masters?

You have to understand, in my mind, Rob Van Dam *is* wrestling.

Are you really a creative genius?

I categorically deny that accusation.

If you had a choice between Vince Russo, Eric Bischoff, or Jim Hellwig (The Ultimate Warrior) to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life,

whom would you pick and why?

I would choose death, because none of them are compatible with other human beings.

How much has ECW spent on tables over the past five years?

I don't have any smart-ass answers for this question.

Why are you the only one in ECW who is still in favor of running shows at the ECW Arena?

Because I'm loyal to my roots.

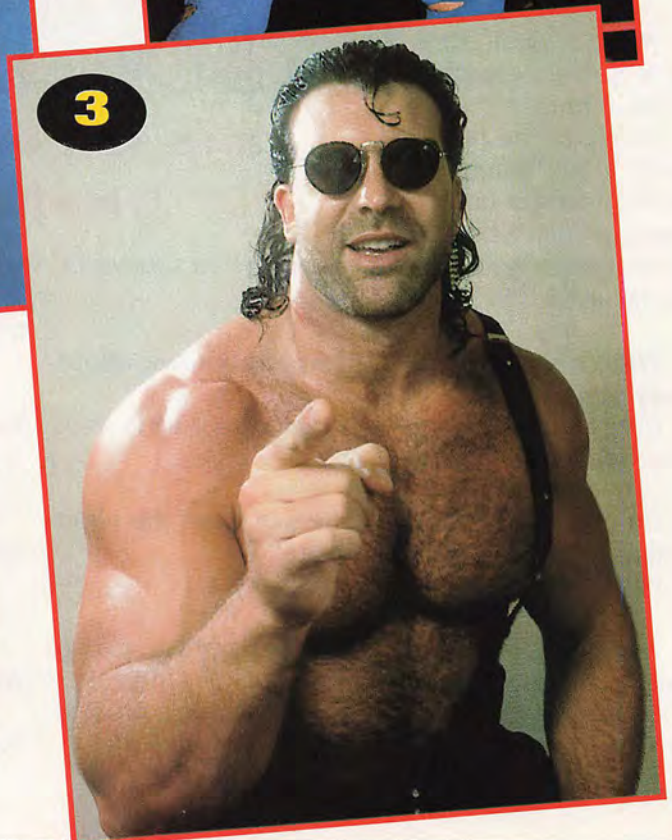
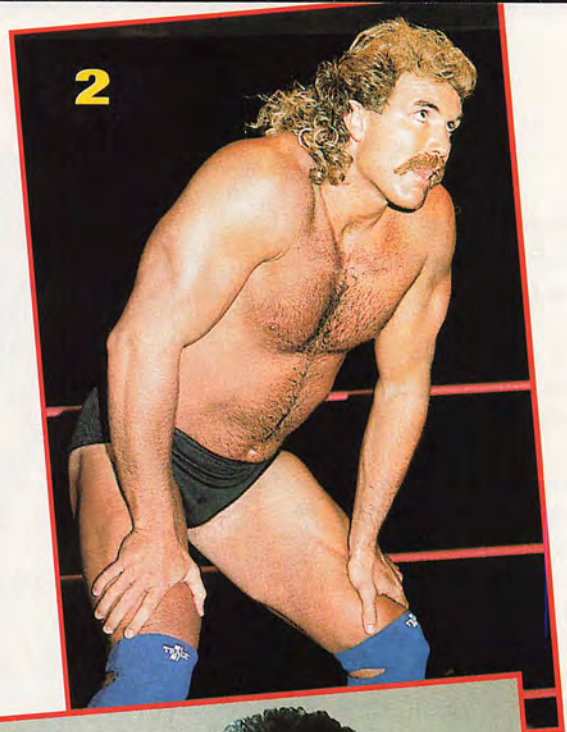
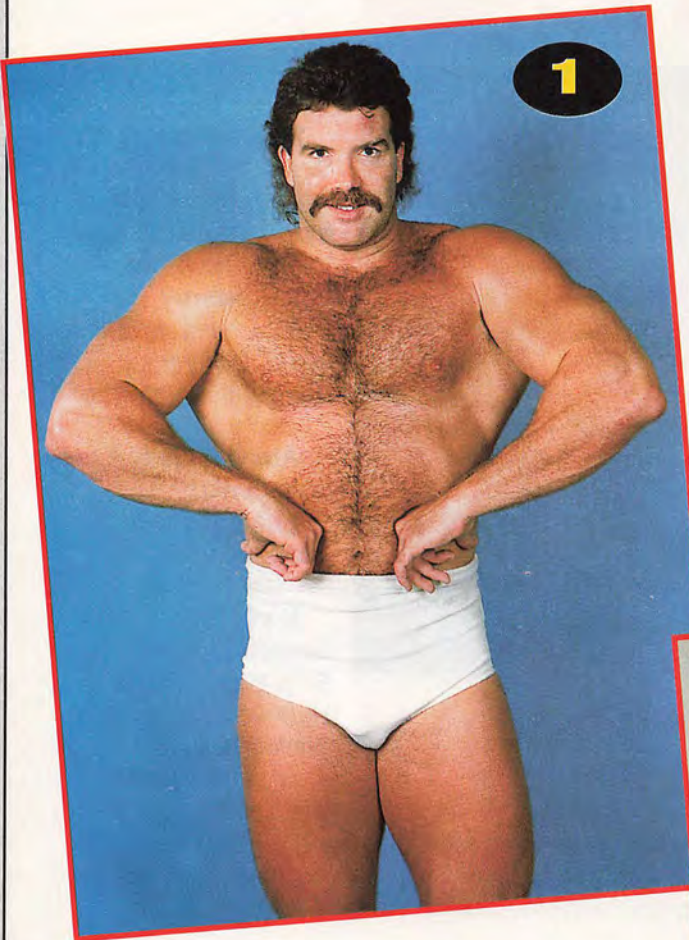
You have a hammer, a midget, and a roulette wheel. What are your plans for the evening?

Sounds like a typical Tuesday night at the Heyman household. □

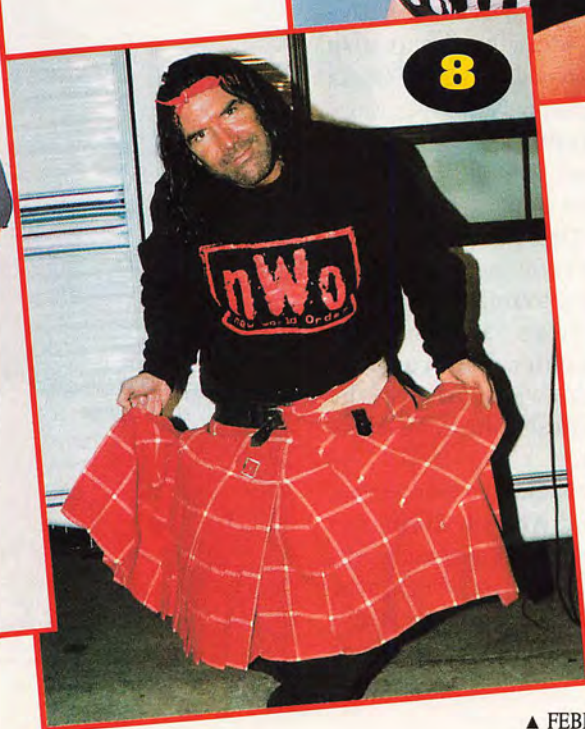
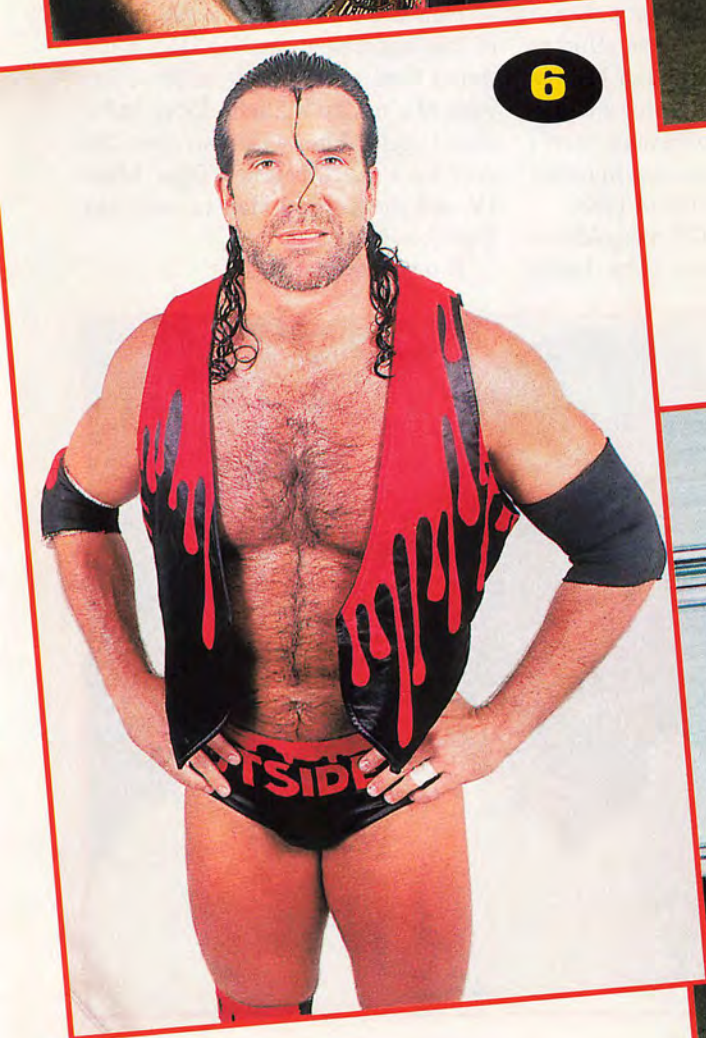
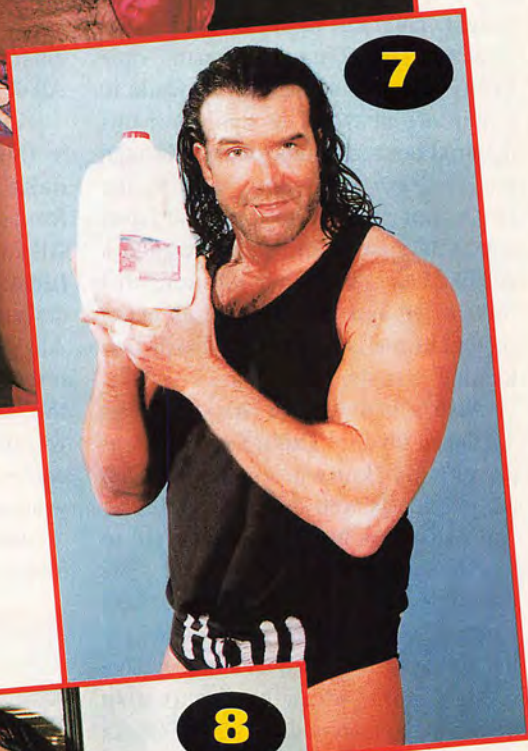
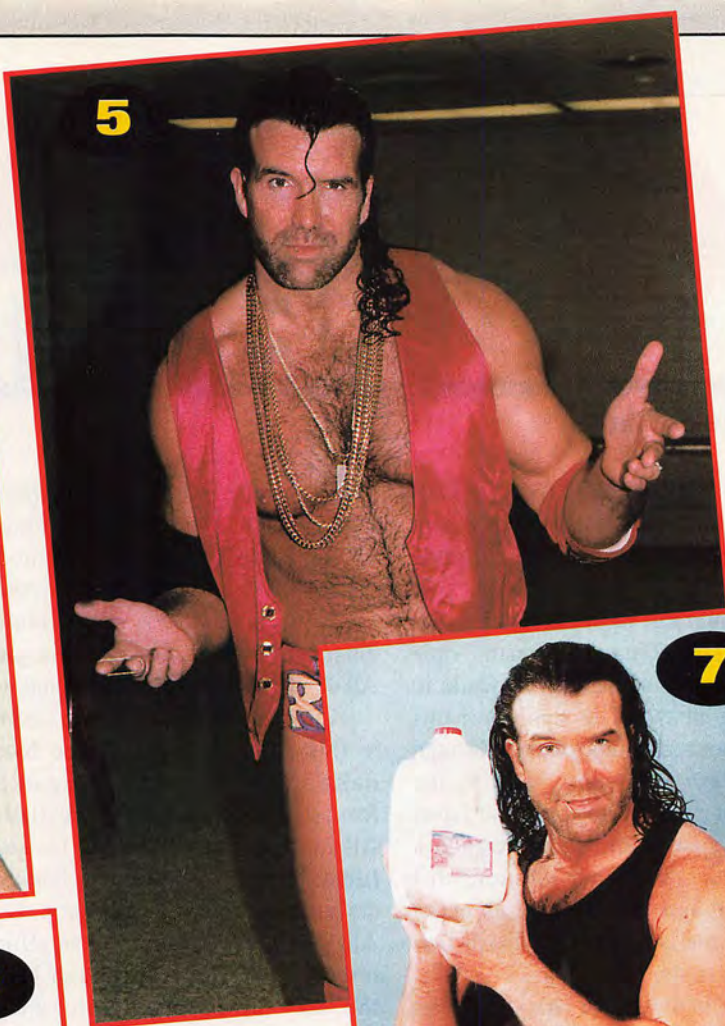
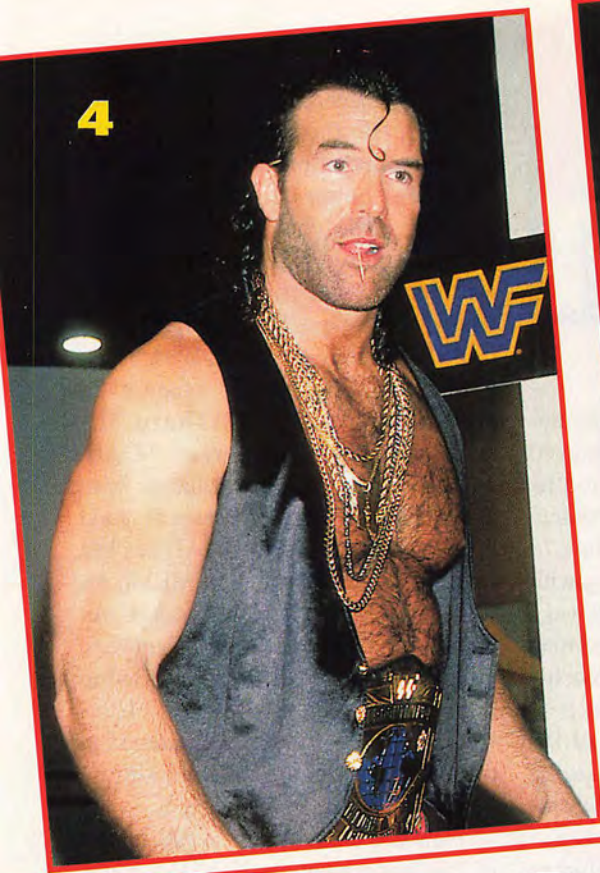
Through the Years

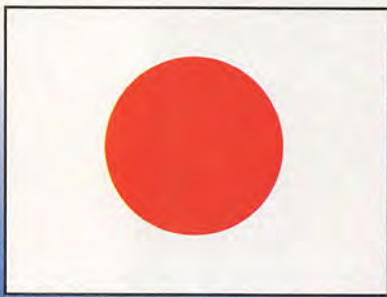
It's amazing how drastically certain superstars change their looks over the years. A change in hair color or hairstyle here, a new ring outfit there, a few more tattoos here *and* there, or the mother of all changes ... the total gimmick overhaul. Every month, *PWI* will show you just how much one of your favorites has transformed himself. Yeah, it really is the same guy in all these photos!

THE SCOTT HALL FILES



- 1-Check out those pythons! (1986)
- 2-Notice the change in hair color (1989)
- 3-What a (Diamond) Studd (1991)
- 4-Don't mess with dee "Bad Guy," man! (1993)
- 5-Looks good in red—and gold (1995)
- 6-An Outsider in WCW (1997)
- 7-Hey, Scott ... got milk? (1998)
- 8-Can't say he has no sense of humor! (1999)





the JAPAN REPORT

By Mike Spillane

JAPANESE WRESTLING FANS couldn't believe the announcement of the main event for New Japan's next Tokyo Dome show. IWGP heavyweight champion **Kensuke Sasaki** was signed to face former All-Japan Triple Crown champion **Toshiaki Kawada** in a non-title match. The signing of this featured bout sent shockwaves through the *puroresu* landscape, marking the first major meeting of top New Japan and All-Japan talent in more than a decade. Fan reaction was so strong that New Japan agreed to reserve an entire section of the Dome for All-Japan fans looking to support Kawada.

Also scheduled for the show was All-Japan favorite **Taiyo Kea**, who was previously known as **Maunukea Mossman**, as well as **Steve Williams** and **Masa Fuchi**. All were signed to face New Japan wrestlers, and at press time, it looked like **Masa Chono**, **Scott Norton**, and **Yutaka Yoshie** would get the nod to tackle those challenges. This loaded Dome show card was also scheduled to feature the return of Osaka Pro's **Super Delfin** to New Japan rings. His opponent: **Jushin Liger**.

While the war with New Japan intensified, interest in the crowning of a new All-Japan Triple Crown champion also increased. Eight men were slated to compete in a tournament for the three vacant titles, and favorites included **Genichiro Tenryu**, **Stan Hansen**, and **Kawada**. Also in the brackets were **Jinsei Shinzaki**, **Mike Barton**, and **Kea**.

In another stunning announcement, hardcore legend **Atsushi Onita** has agreed to appear on an upcoming All-Japan Budokan Hall card. Onita, who wrestled with All-Japan in the early-'80s, hasn't appeared on an All-Japan

show since he retired from the promotion in 1984. Despite being trounced by **Riki Choshu** just a few months back, Onita continues to be a problem for New Japan and is only adding to his nefarious reputation by siding with All-Japan in the interpromotional war.

Another star siding with All-Japan in this strange feud is **Shiro Koshinaka**, a long-time New Japan performer. Koshinaka also wrestled for All-Japan in the 1980s, and his strong friendship with **Masa Fuchi** has insiders and fans thinking he'll jump ship to All-Japan Pro Wrestling in an effort to reignite his career. Although he was the very first IWGP junior heavyweight champion, Koshinaka hasn't enjoyed much singles success in recent years and last held the title in 1988.

Another former IWGP titleholder is making news overseas: New Japan

President **Tatsumi Fujinami**, who held the IWGP heavyweight title five times during his career, has announced plans to retire. His final matches were still being booked at press time, with only top talent being considered for the chance to battle him on his farewell tour. So far, names like **Shinya Hashimoto**, **Satoru Sayama** (the original **Tiger Mask**), and even **Hulk Hogan** have made it onto the list of candidates.

Making the Japanese scene even *more* complicated, **Mitsuharu Misawa's** new wrestling company, NOAH, has agreed to a talent exchange with Michinoku Pro. This comes at a good time for both groups, as NOAH has lost its television coverage, and Michinoku has lost two of its key players in **Gran Naniwa** and **Minoru Fujita**. Naniwa, a protege of Super Delfin, is expected to turn up in Osaka Pro shortly. Meanwhile, Fujita has expressed interest in traveling to Mexico and the United States to gain more experience.

Fans are anxious to see the results of this agreement, as NOAH's traditional hard-hitting style might clash with Michinoku's Lucha Libre-influenced style. This will also open the door for a match between **Tiger Mask IV** and the second man to wear the Tiger hood, Misawa.

Soo da, sayonara!

□



Whom will former five-time IWGP heavyweight champ Tatsumi Fujinami face during his retirement tour? How about Hulk Hogan? Right now, a match between the two is not out of the question.



the MEXICO REPORT

By Mike Spillane

MEXICO CITY'S EL Palacio de los Deportes (roughly translated, "The Sports Palace") is known for being the last stop for many famous masks throughout Lucha Libre history; Veteran *rudo* **Fishman** is just the latest victim of this "Graveyard Of Masks." He recently lost his hood to **Mascara Sagrada** in the main event of a GWAS card.

Earlier in the night, a four-way match between **La Parka**, **Shu El Guerrero**, **Sagrada**, and **Fishman** was held to determine which two men would fight to keep their masks. Since **Sagrada** and **Fishman** were eliminated first, they were obligated to wrestle in the evening's mask vs. mask match (La Parka wound up winning the four-way by pinning El Guerrero). With both masks hanging in the balance, **Sagrada** saved his anonymity by defeating **Fishman** via submission to the cruceta. **Fishman** was revealed to be **Jose Najera**, a 52-year-old native of Coahuila.

A new rivalry has emerged on the scene, as **Antifaz del Norte** claimed **El Dandy**'s hair in a recent match held in Monterrey's Arena Coliseo. The veteran Luchadore, recently back from a two-year stay in WCW, lost to the high-flying **Antifaz** in one of their first confrontations. The two began feuding only a few weeks prior to this match, which made the stipulations that much more unlikely.

Typically, hair and masks are only put on the line when two wrestlers have been feuding at length, with no decisive victor emerging in their series of matches. This case, however, was different. **Dandy** put his hair against **Antifaz**' mask, and the senior wrestler lost his scalp. While it may not take long for **Dandy**'s hair to grow back, the master of the **Dandy** roll is bent on getting revenge. A loss in a hair vs. mask

match ordinarily signals the end of a feud, but this war is still intensifying.

AAA has been looking for ways to revitalize its shows. One new idea will be featured on the "Verano De Escandalo" card, which boasts a main event of **Hector Garza** and **Latin Lover** against **Heavy Metal** and **Perro Aguayo Jr.** What makes this card special is that it will be conducted in a specially built hexagon ring. Intrigued by the octagon rings of the Ultimate Fighting Championships, AAA officials have created a six-sided ring that they'll be experimenting with on a variety of cards throughout the year. The ways in which this can change a standard match can

only be imagined for now, but the unique ring was already a big success for AAA at its annual *Rey de Reyes* ("King Of Kings") card earlier in the year.

Villano V was sidelined for a few weeks after suffering a leg injury in a recent *trios* match. **Villanos III** and **IV** continued to have *trios* bouts, with **Rayo de Jalisco Jr.** subbing for the injured **Villano**. **Villano IV** was also injured in a recent *trios* match that featured the odd pairing of **El Hijo del Santo** with the two youngest **Villanos**. Fortunately, **IV** wasn't expected to miss any time. **Rencor Latino** was also expected to be out of action for about a month after having minor surgery on his left hand.

The CMLL tag team title doesn't seem to be going anywhere, as **Ultimo Guerrero** and **Rey Bucanero** have something of a stranglehold on the belts. Although the recently formed duo of **Mr. Niebla** and **Tony Rivera** have quickly worked their way to the top of the contenders' list and should be getting a title shot in the very near future, the *technicos* will have their hands full with **Guerrero** and **Bucanero**, who are established tag team players. □



Antifaz del Norte recently took the hair of **El Dandy** by defeating the former WCW wrestler in a mask vs. hair match. **Dandy**, however, is expected to seek revenge. Their feud is far from finished.



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SPOTLIGHT CARD OF THE MONTH: PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA—WWF Unforgiven pay-per-view at the First Union Center: **Right To Censor** beat **The Dudley Boyz & The Acolytes** in an eight-man tag team match ... **Tazz** defeated **Jerry Lawler** in a strap match ... **Steve Blackman** won the hardcore invitational battle royal ... **Chris Jericho** beat **X-Pac** ... **The Hardy Boyz** defeated World tag team champions **Edge & Christian** in a cage match to win the title ... Intercontinental champion **Eddie Guerrero** beat **Rikishi** by disqualification ... **Triple-H** defeated **Kurt Angle** ... World champion **The Rock** beat **Chris Benoit**, **The Undertaker**, and **Kane** in a four-way match when he pinned Benoit. (09-24-00)

"Spotlight" photos by Joe Zanolle

UNITED STATES

ALASKA

FAIRBANKS—NWA Mid-Atlantic/WWA at Eielson Air Force Base: **Madd Maxx & The Eagle** beat **Rikki Nelson & Chris Hamrick** ... **Strawberry Fields** beat **Lelani Kai** to win the ladies title ... **The Bushwhackers** beat **George Hines & The Russian Assassin** ... **Sgt. Craig Pittman** beat **Andrue Bane** ... **Rick Morton & Curtis Thompson** beat **Jeff Justice & L.A. Stephens** ... **Tatanka** beat **The Barbarian**. (09-16-00)

—Ned Center

CONNECTICUT

WETHERFIELD—New England Championship Wrestling at The Fun Zone: **Jason Knight** beat **Dylan Kage** ... **Derik Destiny & Dan Hawk** beat **Mass Destruction** ... **Bruce Wee** beat **Tiny the Terrible** ... **Luis Ortiz** beat **Alex Arion** ... **Maverick Wild** beat **Doug Williams** ... **Fred Curry Jr.** beat **Wagner Brown** ... **Mike Hollow** beat **Bob Evans** to become the first NECW heavyweight champion. (09-16-00)

—Rich Palladino

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON—East Coast Wrestling Association at St. Matthew's Parish Hall: **Crowbar** defeated **Robert Evans** ... Mid-Atlantic champion **Glen Osbourne** beat **Mark Shrader** ... **Johnny Maxx**, **Vince Goodnite**, & **Benny Stoltzfus** defeated **Mr. Ooh La La**, **The Persian**

Prince, and **The Japanese Pool Boy** ... **Inferno** defeated heavyweight champion **J.J. The Ring Crew Guy** to win the title ... **Low-Ki** beat **Scot Andrews** ... **The Briscoe Brothers** defeated **Mozart Fontaine** ... **Kevin Kelly & The Haas Brothers** beat **Ty Street & Cheetah Master** in a handicap match. (09-23-00)

—Brett A. Schwan

FLORIDA

NEW PORT RICHEY—IPW Hardcore Wrestling at the All Sports Arena: **The Freak Foundation** beat **LiveWire & Justice** and **Havoc & Subway** in a three-way match ... **Scot Andrews** defeated **Jet Jaguar** ... **Cuban Assassin** beat **Barry Horowitz** ... **Haystacks Calhoun Jr.** defeated **Sonny T** in a streetfight ... **Gabrielle** beat **Climaxxx** by countout ... **Drunk & Disorderly** beat **The Insane York Brothers** ... **The Predators** defeated **Mike Shane & Jet Jaguar** ... Hardcore champion **Rick Thames** beat **Navy SEAL**. (09-09-00)

—Edward L. Ruskin

GEORGIA

DALTON—Tri-Star Wrestling Alliance at the TWA Arena: **Johnny Blaze** defeated **Adam Jacobs** ... **Rick Justice** defeated **Rocky Star** ... **Roger Foster** defeated **John Hazard** ... **Bobby Hayes** defeated **Crazy Billy** ... **The 69 Boyz** won a battle royal to become co-holders of the hardcore title. (09-22-00)

—John Johnson

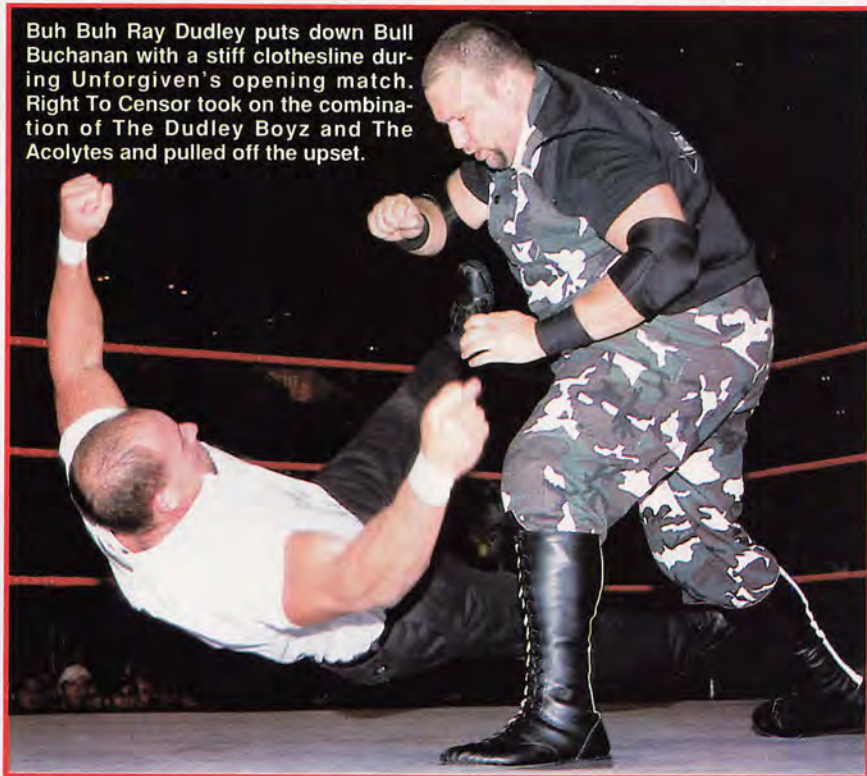
ATLANTA—Extreme Wrestling Alliance/National Wrestling Federation at the American Veterans Bingo Hall: **Ted the Dragon** defeated **DJ Flash** ... **Rowdy Jackson** defeated **Xcitement** ... **Beau Dacious** defeated **TnT** ... **Dark Gable** beat **Imenim** to win the U.S. title ... **Silky Boom Boom** defeated **Shepherd**. (09-05-00)

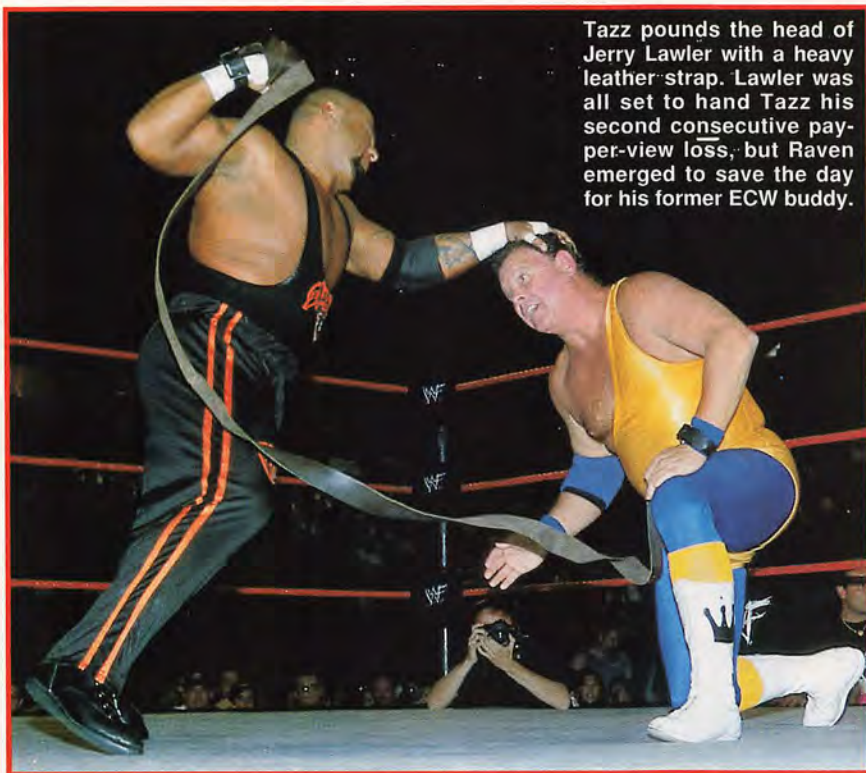
—John Johnson

INDIANA

COLUMBUS—Hoosier Pro Wrestling at the 4-H Fairgrounds Family Arts Building: **Jack Manson** defeated **Justin Sane** ... **The Butcher** defeated **The Misfit** ... **Dave Dynasty**, **Jesse Houston**, &

Buh Buh Ray Dudley puts down **Bull Buchanan** with a stiff clothesline during Unforgiven's opening match. **Right To Censor** took on the combination of **The Dudley Boyz** and **The Acolytes** and pulled off the upset.





Tazz pounds the head of Jerry Lawler with a heavy leather strap. Lawler was all set to hand Tazz his second consecutive pay-per-view loss, but Raven emerged to save the day for his former ECW buddy.

Vinny Vachetti defeated The Hollywood Swingers & Renegade ... Lonny Lee defeated Tommy Ray Sands ... Roy Presley defeated Psycho to win the cruiserweight title ... Bobo Brazil Jr. defeated Ronnie Vegas to win the heavyweight title. (09-17-00)

—Paul Pierce

INDIANAPOLIS—Wild Championship Wrestling Outlaws at the Ramada Inn: Johnnie Walker defeated The Man They Call James ... Don Basher pinned Tarantula ... Heavyweight champ Indiana Kidd Jr. beat Jazz Hoyt ... Itch Coma Weider defeated Big Daddy ... Cousin Otter defeated E.Z. Cruz ... Guy Lombardo pinned Shiloh Hunter ... Ladies champion Angelfire pinned Amber Jewel ... Rob Ramer defeated Shawn Cook ... The Spyder defeated Black Cat ... Lamar Erkle defeated Johnnie Walker by reverse decision ... Tag team champs Don Basher & E.Z. Cruz defeated The Screaming Eagles ... Heavyweight champ Indiana Kidd Jr. defeated Rob Ramer. (09-09-00)

—Randy Klemme

MARION—EWF at the EWF Arena: Nigel Slacker beat Hardcore Harris ... Johnny Law beat Dexter P. Wyler ... Phoenix beat Hypnosis in a loser-leaves-the-EWF match ... Eden beat Grizzly and Jack Hammer in a three-way hardcore match ... Tag team champs Rex Diamond & Troy Miller beat Slim Trimmings & Prime Time ... Bob defeated Demolition Ax by disqualification. (09-09-00)

—Orlando Yeath

KANSAS

LEAVENWORTH—Midland Empire Wrestling at Riverfest 2000: Jack Adams defeated The Irish Luchadore ... The Assassin & Twisted Steel defeated Kid U.S.A. & Hazeln ... Thorn defeated

The Punisher ... Quik Silver won a 12-man battle royal ... Twisted Steel defeated The Original Ass Kicker by countout ... The Little Italian Stallion pinned Mad Mex in a midget match ... Bashful Brad defeated Kong ... Bloodlust defeated Makaze and Malachy in a three-way match. (09-10-00)

—John Dobson

FORT SCOTT—WCCW at the National Guard Armory: Mr. Wrestling III beat Terry Bryant ... Stan Sweetan defeated Wilbert J. Poindexter ... Lunatic beat Ryan Reed ... Cookie S.



Former hardcore champs Al Snow and Crash do battle with a chair during Unforgiven's hardcore invitational battle royal. Despite the chaotic atmosphere, Steve Blackman retained his hardcore title.

Cummings defeated Cherry Blossom ... Tim Vain & Daniel Flynn beat Bad Company ... Doink defeated Jake Shocker by disqualification. (09-09-00)

—Eddie Franklin

KENTUCKY

SHELBYVILLE—Bad 2 the Bone Wrestling at the Shelby County Fairgrounds: The Regulator defeated Josh Garrett ... Psychodelic pinned T.J. Lightnin' ... Low Rider beat BioHazard ... Billy Black pinned Mitch Page to win the hardcore title ... Heavyweight champ Todd Morton beat Low Rider. (09-09-00)

—Paul Therian

MARYLAND

DUNDALK—Mid-Eastern Wrestling Federation at SherWes Gardens: Tommy Hawk pinned Eagle ... Whiplash defeated The G.O.A.T ... Stevie Riggs & Hurricane Kid beat The Freak Show ... Jim Christian defeated The Natural ... Lucifer defeated Otto Sthark ... Maxx Thrasher defeated heavyweight champion Buzz Striker, Dino Casanova, and Morgus the Maniac in a four-way match to win the title ... Rayne and Mad Dog O'Malley fought to a double-countout ... Rockin' Rebel beat Ruckus ... Lucifer & Bob Starr defeated Tokyo Terror Kentaro & Private Pain to win the tag team title. (09-22-00)

—Michael Tesman

MASSACHUSETTS

BUCKLIN—International Independent Wrestling at Mohawk Trail High School: Cruiserweight champion Dan Bidondi defeated Tiger Phang ... Tony Atlas pinned Gary Gold ... New England champion El Mascarado beat The Widow Maker ... Jose Perez beat Travis Funk ... Mr. Biggs & Donny Rotten defeated The Latin Furies ... Heavyweight champion Kyle Storm defeated John Kronus by countout ... The Widow Maker won a battle royal. (09-16-00)

—Anthony Rufo



At Unforgiven, Chris Jericho and X-Pac wrestled each other yet again. Y2J walked away with the win, but the next night on *Raw*, X-Pac beat Jericho in a first-blood match.

REVERE—Primal Conflict Wrestling at Wonderland Greyhound Park: Primantis beat I-69 ... Suicidal Silva beat Tiger Khan ... Gregory Drago beat Mark Thunder ... Jose Perez beat Kevin Kharizma and Pretty Boy Hernandez in a three-way match ... Tiny the Terrible beat YMC Andy ... Tag team champions The Millennium Killaz and The Pit Bulls wrestled to a no-contest ... Kyle Storm beat John Kronus and The Intern in a three-way match. (09-08-00)

—Rich Palladino

MINNESOTA

ST. PAUL—ECW Anarchy Ruiz pay-per-view at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium: *In a match not shown on the pay-per-view telecast:* Nova beat Bilvis Wesley ... *Pay-per-view bouts:* Danny Doring & Roadkill defeated Christian York & Joey Matthews ... Kid Kash beat E.Z. Money ... Joel Gertner defeated Cyrus ... Da Baldies beat Mahoney & Chilly Willy ... Steve Corino defeated C.W. Anderson ... World tag team champions Little Guido Maritato & Tony Mamaluke beat Mikey Whipwreck & Yoshihiro Tajiri ... TV champion Rhino defeated Rob Van Dam ... Jerry Lynn beat World champion Justin Credible to win the title. (10-01-00)

—Timothy A. Redden

MISSISSIPPI

OXFORD—Memphis Championship Wrestling at Billiards: The Latin Brothers defeated Tracey Smothers & Lance Cade ... Spanky defeated The Fabulous Rocker ... Light heavyweight champion American Dragon defeated Reckless Youth ... Joey Abs defeated Pete Gas ... Hollywood defeated The Fabulous Rocker ... Thrasher beat Robbie ... Ronnie James beat Seven ... K. Krush defeated Shooter Schultz. (09-06-00)

—Dominick Valenti

MISSOURI

VERSAILLES—World League Wrestling at the Morgan County Middle School: Superstar Steve defeated Deputy Dale ... Johnny Jett beat Chopper ... Mr. Destiny defeated Big Daddy Moore ... The All-Americans beat Chopper & Tim Warcloud ... Trevor Rhodes defeated Matt Murphy ... Heavyweight champion James Grizzell beat Bull Schmitt. (09-30-00)

—Matt Duffield

NEW JERSEY

SOUTH RIVER—Garden State Wrestling Alliance at the Knights of Columbus: Ryan Wing defeated Don Montoya ... Darren Wyse beat Nicky Quick ... Cannonball defeated Dave Greco & Kid Katrell in a handicap match ... The Soul Brothers beat Moondogs 2000 ... Amy Lee defeated Felipe The Pool Boy in a mixed gender match ... Billy Reil defeated Tiger Mulligan ... Sabu beat Ace Darling and Crowbar in a three-way dance. (09-23-00)

—Dominick Valenti

WEST PATERSON—IWF at Camp IWF: P.W. Stryker beat Brian Selgiman ... Brittany St. James upset B.P.A. Barry ... Max Chance pinned Lil' Rage ... B.J. Thomas pinned Tony Balboa ... Roman pinned St. Patrick ... Tag team champs Dr. Hurtz & Marc Verow beat Kevin Knight & Biggie Biggs ... Kasey beat J.T. Blaze ... H.P. Walker pinned Joey Image ... Hadrian upset Scott Rooter. (09-10-00)

—Dorothy Sultana

TOMS RIVER—Big Buc Promotions at Toms River High School: Crowbar pinned Kevin Knight ... Harley Lewis pinned B.J. Thomas ... The Matrix defeated Biggie Biggs & The Backseat Boyz in a six-man tag team match ... The Patriot beat King Kong Bundy by disqualification ... Big Slam wrestled Doink the Clown to a no-contest ... 911

beat Big Slam ... Dr. Hurtz beat Slayer in a stretcher match ... The Blue Boy & Donnie B beat Rik Ratchett & Felipe The Pool Boy in a steel cage match; as a result of a prematch stipulation, Ratchett was forced to retire from wrestling. (09-08-00)

—Timothy A. Walker & Dorothy Sultana

JACKSON—United Wrestling Coalition at Six Flags Great Adventure: Rick Silver & Don Montoya beat Ryan Wing & Frankie Force ... Toolbox beat Matt Storm ... Warhead beat Pine Barron ... The Orphan beat Joe Rules to win the North American title ... Hasheem Ali beat Tommy Force ... Dr. Hurtz beat Zieg, Silvermane, and Mark Manson in a four-way match ... C.J. Summer & Tundra beat tag team champs The Ripper & Bobby Piper in a non-title match ... Heavyweight champion Billy Lasiter and Mark Melaccio wrestled to a double-disqualification ... Nova beat Simon Diamond. (09-04-00)

—Andrew Wilson

NEW YORK

BUFFALO—WCW Fall Brawl pay-per-view at the HSBC Arena: Cruiserweight champion Elix Skipper beat Kwee-Wee ... The Misfits In Action defeated Three Count ... The Harris Boys beat Kronik in a first-blood chain match ... U.S. champion Lance Storm defeated Gen. Rection ... The Natural Born Thrillers and The Filthy Animals wrestled to a no-contest ... Torrie Wilson & Shane Douglas beat Billy Kidman & Madusa in a scaffold match ... Sting defeated The Great Muta and Vampiro in a three-way match ... Mike Awesome beat Jeff Jarrett in a bunkhouse brawl ... Scott Steiner defeated Bill Goldberg in a no-disqualification match ... Booker T beat World champion Kevin Nash in a cage match to regain the title. (09-17-00)

—Dutch Krewda

NORTH CAROLINA

BURLINGTON—East Coast Pro Wrestling at the Armory: Sgt. Maxx Rhodes beat Damien Storm ... Sebastian Kane beat James Reno ... Alan Rage beat Joe Storm ... Marc Ash beat Carolina Kidd and Ethan Cage in a three-way match to win the Intercontinental title ... Rob McBride & L.A. Wild One beat Redd & Slick Rick to win the tag title ... Bobby Fulton beat Jackie Fulton to win the heavyweight title. (09-23-00)

—Marcus Watkins

SANFORD—Southern Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: Krash the Milkman beat Rampage ... High Octane beat Low-Ki ... Big Slam beat Brute Shooter ... Juice beat Razor Gas ... Stratus & Aldo DeGama beat Scorn & Rage ... William Wealth beat Lazarus ... Cham Pain beat Scab to win the heavyweight title. (09-15-00)

—Greg Mosorjak

KINSTON—Independent Wrestling Alliance at the Kinston Lincoln-Mercury Dealership: Max Cortez beat Vax ... Vinnie Vain beat Jamaica Joe ... William Wealth beat Mikael Yamaha ... Johnny J beat Stratus ... Nemesis beat Misfit ... Marc Ash beat Doink the Clown ... Viper beat Iron Chief. (09-09-00)

—Marcus Watkins

OHIO

WEST UNION—Real American Wrestling at Adams Fairgrounds: Toby Cline beat El Chulos

... The Maestro defeated Jeff Cannon ... Shark Boy beat G.Q. Masters III to win the cruiser-weight title ... Bull Pain defeated Shasta McNasty ... Dan Severn beat Johnny Rayz ... Bull Pain & Race Steele defeated Rogue & Cyrus Steele.
(09-29-00)

—Stephen Anthony

DAYTON—Heartland Wrestling Association at Gateway Sports Park: The A Squad defeated Chip Fairway & Rory Fox ... The Xtremist pinned J.J. Duquesne ... B.J. Whitmer defeated Tim Moxley ... Cody Hawk & Anthony McMurphy beat Bobby Casanova & G.Q. Masters III by disqualification ... Logan Caine pinned The Xtremist ... Race Steele & Shark Boy beat Matt Stryker & Chad Collyer in a "Texas Tornado" match.
(09-16-00)

—Philip Selquist

PENNSYLVANIA

HERSHEY—WWF at the Hersheypark Arena: Val Venis beat Essa Rios ... Hardcore champion Steve Blackman defeated X-Pac ... Bull Buchanan & The Goodfather beat Too Cool ... Kurt Angle defeated Chris Jericho ... European champion Al Snow beat Perry Saturn ... The Dudley Boyz defeated Edge & Christian ... Rikishi beat Chris Benoit.
(10-01-00)

—Thomas R. Leapold



Christian and Lita recover after Lita huracanrana'd Christian off a ladder during a cage match between World tag team champs Edge and Christian and The Hardy Boyz. Matt and Jeff became the WWF tag champs for a second time.

McKEESPORT—Pro Wrestling Xpress at Turner Arena: Black Cat defeated Todd Thompson ... Vince Kaplack pinned J-Ru ... Armageddon defeated Jefferson Allan & J-Rocc ... Super Hentai beat Cueffa ... Pro Wrestling League Three Rivers champion Boomer Payne defeat-

ed Homicide ... Paul Atlas & Jimmy Anjel defeated Shirley Doe & Devil Bhudakahn ... Orion defeated Chris Hero & J.B. Destiny in a three-way match to win the TV title ... Vince Kaplack defeated Lou Marconi to win the heavyweight title.
(09-22-00)

—Mike Charles



With Chyna watching, Intercontinental champion Eddie Guerrero defends his title against Rikishi by peppering the big Samoan with hard lefts and rights. With the help of Chyna, Guerrero stole the match.

MUNHALL—Far North Wrestling at the Steel Valley Street Fair: Ricky Martinez defeated Blade ... Dennis Gregory defeated Toby Cline ... Bigg Playa defeated Jay Pumper ... Cyrus Steele pinned Brian O ... Tony Atlas beat Matt Borne ... Heavyweight champion Seth James defeated T. Rantula.
(09-16-00)

—Stephen Anthony

ARDENTSVILLE—North East Championship Wrestling at the Fairgrounds: Cyrus Steele pinned Seth James ... Cousin Luke defeated Shawn Simpson ... Angel defeated Little Jeannie ... Super Destroyer defeated Jimi Johnson ... Demolition Ax & Doink the Clown beat T. Rantula & Manny Fernandez.
(09-13-00)

—Stephen Anthony

PALO ALTO—Future Wrestling Alliance at the Citizens' Fire Hall: Qeenan Creed pinned Mark Shrader ... Homicide defeated Dino Divine ... High Voltage and Marshal Law wrestled to a no-contest ... Rich Myers pinned Tommy Idol ... Candie beat Colleen ... Tag team champions Doomsday Danny Rose & Adam Flash defeated Ronnie Zukko & Twiggy Ramirez ... Don Montoya & Low-Ki defeated Monsta Mack & Vince Mendoza ... Jake Daniels defeated heavyweight champion Mike Quackenbush in a last-man-standing match to win the title.
(09-09-00)

—Timothy A. Walker

RHODE ISLAND

PROVIDENCE—Power League Wrestling at St. Ann's School: Sub-Zero won a 10-man battle royal ... New England champion Maniacal Mark defeated Tim Kilgore ... Stryker defeated Don Vega ... Amanda Storm defeated Jason the Slasher ... Kid Krazy defeated



Triple-H moves to cover Kurt Angle. Though pay-per-view viewers might have thought a swerve was in the works from either Hunter's wife, Stephanie, or special ref Mick Foley, Hunter won on his own merits.

Little Killer, Vertabreaker, Kash Knight, Hi-Lite Kid, and Gino Giovanni in a "Pier Six Brawl" to become the first-ever PLW lightweight champion ... **Iron Fist** defeated **Chris Blackheart** ... Tag team champions **The Damned** defeated **Elements of Suicide** by disqualification ... **Edward G. Xtasy** defeated **Sub-Zero** ... **Shane Simons** defeated **Robbie Ellis** ... **Dr. Heresy** defeated **Don Juan de Santo** and **Chris Venom** in a three-way match to win the heavyweight title. (09-16-00)

—Carlos Arenas

TEXAS

PLANO—Texas Championship Wrestling at the Nuthin' But Net Rec Center: **New Age Dogg** beat **Blake Wiggins** ... **Joey Corman** & **Big John Murder** and **Tony Blair** & **Flame** wrestled to a double-disqualification ... **Shea Wright** beat **Epicenter** ... **Pendragon** & **Kevin Dark** beat **Brangus** & **Donnie Rose** by disqualification ... Texas champ **Big Johnson** beat **Mace** ... **Scott Patric** & **Melissa** beat **Chris Chronic** & **Mary Jane**. (09-23-00)

—Allen Pike

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS—NWA Southwest at the Texas Indoor Speedway: **Kevin Douglas** beat **The Joker** ... **Al Jackson** beat **Gravedigger** by disqualification ... **Joey Corman** beat **Mike Thunder** ... Hardcore champion **Necro Butcher** beat **Mr. Mayhem** and **Hugh Rouge** in a three-way match ... **Action Jackson** beat **Zane Morris**. (09-22-00)

—Allen Pike

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND—WWF at the Coliseum: **Faarooq** beat **D-Lo Brown** ... **The Brooklyn Brawler** defeated **Just Joe** ... **Ivory** beat **Harvey**

Wippleman ... World champ **The Rock** defeated **Kane** ... Light heavyweight champion **Dean Malenko** beat **Raven** ... **Crash** defeated **Gangrel** ... Intercontinental champion **Eddie Guerrero** beat **Road Dogg** ... **The Hardy Boyz**



& Lita defeated **Test, Albert, & Trish Stratus.**
(10-01-00)

—Dave Lenker

MARTINSVILLE—American Independent Wrestling Federation at Cable 6 Studios: **Major Havoc** defeated **Mitch Blake** ... **The Savior** and **Jason McNasty** fought to a no-contest ... **J.T. Sledge** beat **Creeping Death** ... **The Savior & Jason McNasty** defeated **The Psychopath & Haywood Jeter** ... U.S. champion **Rick Deezel** beat **Rage** ... **Steve Niles** defeated heavyweight champ **The Scorpion** for the title.
(09-05-00)

—David Leander

WEST VIRGINIA

BLUEFIELD—Ram Wrestling at the Brushfork Armory: **Shane Helms** beat **Lazarous** ... **The Russian Mafia** beat **Double D & David Isley** ... **Beef** defeated **Mac Truck** ... **Bobby Eaton** beat **Poison Ivey** ... **Frank Parker** defeated **Major DeBeers** in a hardcore match ... **Candi** beat **Missy Hyatt** in an evening gown match in which **Shane Helms** served as the special referee ... **Lodi & Shady** defeated **The Russian Mafia** ... **The Barbarian** and **Barry Windham** wrestled to a double-disqualification.
(09-09-00)

—Dan Parris

MORGANTOWN—Mason Dixon Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: Heavyweight champ **Mason Hunter** wrestled **Brock Singleton** to a no-contest ... **Brian Logan** wrestled **Seth James** to a double-disqualification ... **Thrillbilly Ox & Puck** beat **Johnny Blast & The Executioner** ... **Thrillbilly Ox** beat **Johnny Blast** ... **Puck** beat **Billy Aldrich** ... **Chick Scott** beat **Hardcore Hancock**.
(09-09-00)

—Mark Mills

OAK HILL—All Pro Wrestling at the Oak Hill Armory: **Marty Gras** beat **Brian Douglas** to win the cruiserweight title ... **Danny Ray & Scott McComas** beat **Dave Scott & Mark Brody** ... **Chuck Jones** beat **Cuban Assassin II** ... **Bad Boys** beat tag team champs **The New Breed** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion

War Machine beat **Chris Hamrick** in a hardcore match.
(09-05-00)

—Henry Neilender

WISCONSIN

EAU CLAIRE—AAW at the Ice Arena: **Adrian Lynch** beat **Eric Hammers** ... **Cujo** and **L.A. Mauler** beat **Mass Destruction** ... **Killer Claw** and **The Natural Man** fought to a double-disqualification ... **Horace the Psychopath** beat **Tony Dennuci** ... **Choo-Choo & Mike Diamond** beat **Cell Block 5** ... **Natural Man, The Bull, & Tower of Power** beat **The Prep Boyz & Mad Wolverine** ... **Jerry Lynn** beat **Adam Booker** ... **Tony Dennuci** won a 12-man battle royal.
(09-16-00)

—Nicholas Loken

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY—Titan Wrestling Promotions at the Parramatta RSL Club: **Sonic** defeated **Pistol Pete** ... **Red Flair** and **Fabio the Fabulous** wrestled to a double-countout ... **Wildchild** defeated **Sonic** ... Light heavyweight champ **Super Thunder** and **Maverick** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Dean Draven** beat **The Chief** to win the heavyweight title.
(09-09-00)

—Edward Weeks

CANADA

CLOVERDALE, BRITISH COLUMBIA—International Championship Wrestling at the Cloverdale Fairgrounds Products Building: **Whiplash** won an 11-man battle royal ... **Zig** beat **Punk Rock Prod** ... **Vincent Terelli** defeated **Stoney Edwards** ... **Sonny Omara** beat **Moose** ... **Fender Gibson** defeated **Hecklez Da Clown** ... **Trelance** beat **Tiger Redding** ... **Jake Evans** defeated **Vincent Hall** ... **Blaze Daily** beat **Patty McHale** ... **Scotty Braden** defeated **Makavelli** ... **Ken Riley** beat **Bryan Alvarez** ... **Shooter** defeated **Chris Del Sol** ... **Randy Taylor** beat **Ken Johnson** ... **Mr. GQ** defeated **Rugged Rod** ... **Combat Girl** beat **Mr. Sexy** ... Tag team champions **Buddy**

Wayne & Ritchie Magnett beat **The Chef & Avalanche** ... **Urban Outlaw** and **Tim Flowers** wrestled to a no-contest in a hardcore match.
(09-30-00)

—Neil O'Brien

TORONTO, ONTARIO—Apocalypse Wrestling Federation at Cactus Pete's: **El Fuego** beat **Vladimir Urkov** ... **Robin Knightwing** pinned **Slade** ... **Jaguar Vijay Singh** beat **Fabian Stokes** ... **Sinn** beat **Flesh Gordon** ... **The Mysterious Mayhem** and **Sheik Mustafa** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Tony Mack** beat **David Diamond** ... **El Fuego** pinned **Robin Knightwing** ... **Jaguar** defeated **Sinn** ... **Jaguar Vijay Singh** defeated heavyweight champion **Tony Mack** to win the title.
(09-17-00)

—Bertrand Hebert

NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA—Extreme Canadian Championship Wrestling at Eagles Hall: **Notorious Tid** beat **Mad Dog Manson** for the hardcore title ... **Brian Snell** defeated **G Spot** ... **Matt Farmer** defeated **Awesome Adam** ... **Ladies Choice & Lane Fontaine** defeated **G.O.D.** for the tag team belts ... **Torch** beat **Chance Beckett** for the junior heavyweight title in a ladder match ... **Disco Fury** beat **Torch** to win the junior heavyweight belt ... Heavyweight champion **Juggernaut** wrestled to a no-contest with **Dr. Luther**.
(09-15-00)

—Dominick Valenti

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY FEBRUARY

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS—NWA at the Kiel Center: **Murray Cummings & Reggie Parks** defeated **Tom Andrews & Bennie Ramirez** ... **Bill Miller** beat **Ronnie Etchison** ... **Wilbur Snyder** defeated **Moose Cholak** ... **Pat O'Connor** beat **Angelo Poffo** ... **Baron Von Raschke & Hans Schmidt** and **Rufus R. Jones & Dewey Robertson** wrestled to a draw ... **Blackjack Lanza** and **Dick the Bruiser** wrestled to a double-disqualification ... **Jack Brisco** beat **Pak Song**.
(02-05-71)

—PWI archives

NEW YORK

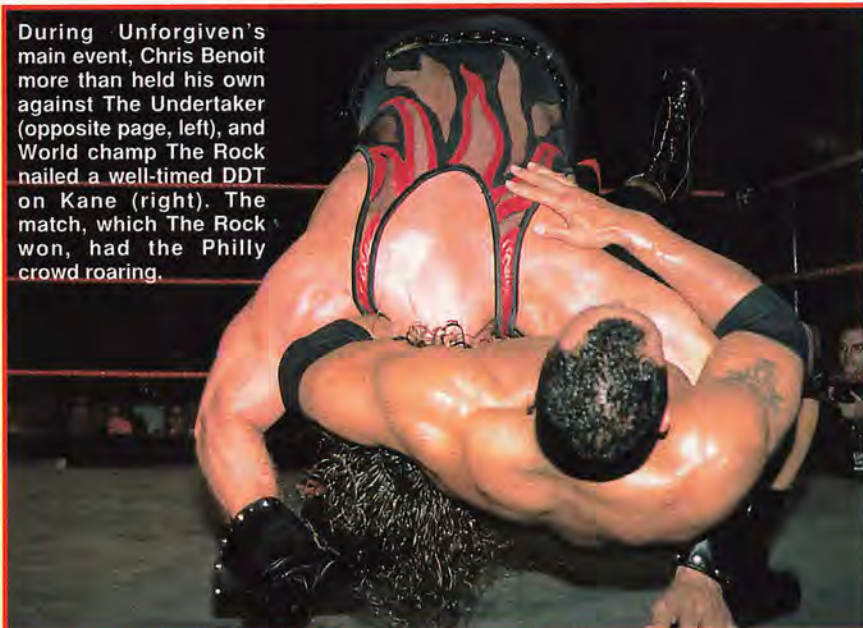
NEW YORK—WWF at Madison Square Garden: **The Iron Sheik** beat **Eddie Gilbert** ... **Samoan I** defeated **Tony Garea** ... **Andre the Giant** beat **The Masked Superstar** ... **David Shultz & Roddy Piper** defeated **The Invaders** ... **Jimmy Snuka** beat **Samoan II** ... **B. Brian Blair** defeated **Mike Sharpe** ... **Jose Luis Rivera** beat **Charlie Fulton** ... Intercontinental champion **Tito Santana** beat **Magnificent Muraco** by countout ... World champion **Hulk Hogan** defeated **Paul Orndorff**.
(02-20-84)

—PWI archives

NEW YORK—WWWF at Madison Square Garden: **Tatsumi Fujinami** beat **Ted Adams** ... **Ken Patera** defeated **Peter Maivia** ... **Mil Mascaras** beat **Mr. Fuji** ... **Spiros Arion** defeated **Chief Jay Strongbow** ... **Dusty Rhodes** beat **Prof. Toru Tanaka** ... **Bob Backlund** defeated World champion **Superstar Billy Graham** for the title.
(02-20-78)

—PWI archives

During **Unforgiven's** main event, **Chris Benoit** more than held his own against **The Undertaker** (opposite page, left), and World champ **The Rock** nailed a well-timed DDT on **Kane** (right). The match, which **The Rock** won, had the Philly crowd roaring.

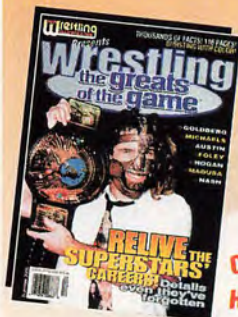


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ringside

(Continued from page 13)



Former WCW cruiserweight champion Elix Skipper tries to pin Cpl. Cajun. Right now, Skipper isn't too pleased with his Team Canada mates. Maybe it's time for him to once again claim his American birthright.

sheer brawn. It's another to do it with a pencil. Respect comes with the former and not with the latter—regardless of how many “Hell In A Cell” matches you’ve wrestled.

Though U.S. champion **Lance Storm** is the one who originally gave **Team Canada** member **Elix Skipper** the cruiserweight title, there is dissension in the group because of the way Skipper lost the title to “**Above Average**” **Mike Sanders**.

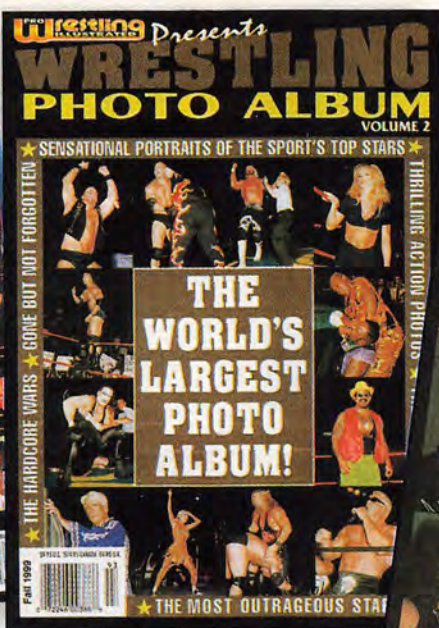
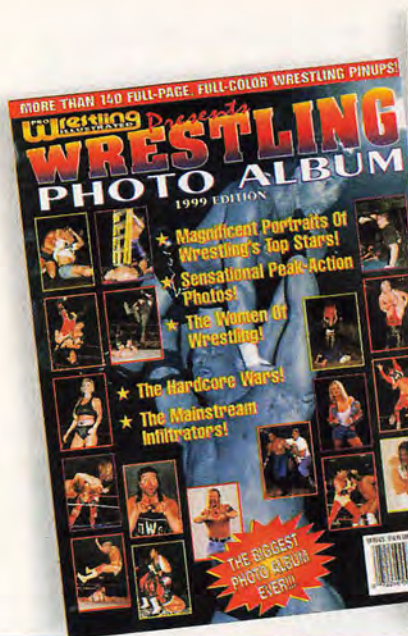
Skipper was defending the title against Sanders on October 2 when **Kevin Nash** blatantly interjected himself into the match on Sanders’ behalf. Skipper valiantly tried to wrestle both men (he even sent down Nash with a missile dropkick), but the double-team efforts of Nash and Sanders eventually proved too strong, and Skipper lost the title. When I spoke with “Prime Time” backstage, he was not at all

pleased that his Team Canada buddies never came out to even the odds.

“Listen, I thought being a part of Team Canada would have its benefits,” Skipper said. “But I can’t believe Lance and **Jim [Duggan]** didn’t help me in that match. And I’ll tell you something, if that had been Lance defending his title out there tonight, you can bet your ass I would have been expected to show up and help him out. Who knows, maybe Team Canada just isn’t for me after all.”

Everyone here at *PWI* was sad to learn of the death of **Klondike Bill**, former wrestler and long-time WCW ring crew member. Anytime anybody from *PWI* went to the matches, Bill was one of the first to say hello and was always ready with a helping hand. He will be missed.

That’s it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □



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"500" FEEDBACK



The Holiday issue of *PWI* is always among the most talked about issues of the year for one reason and one reason only: the "PWI 500."

The "500" is highly controversial, but it is also the most respected ranking of wrestlers in the industry. Of course, the only wrestler who is ever truly pleased with his ranking is the number-one man, and this year, Triple-H walked away with the honor. So, other than a few kind words directed our way, we didn't hear too much from him. There were enough angry, disgruntled wrestlers and fans contacting our offices, though.

"I can't believe Triple-H was number one this year," wrote Jamie Sundin of Nuttsville, Virginia. "That should have been The Rock's position."

"I've seen it all this year," wrote Dan Bridges of Cleveland, Georgia. "Jushin Liger in the top 10 has to be the '500's' worst selection ever."

"No matter what, you guys always do a great job with the '500,'" wrote Sandy Cooke of Cape May, New Jersey. "There was no better pick than Triple-H this year."

EUROPEAN CHUMP-ION?

When is Al Snow going to stop putting up with Mick Foley's snide remarks and challenge him to a match?

JOHN VACCARO
Grassy Butte, ND

AWARD LOBBYING

This is my urgent plea to the readers of *PWI*: Vote Triple-H Wrestler of the Year.

"The Game" defeated Cactus Jack cleanly at two consecutive pay-per-views, miraculously made it through WrestleMania with the belt, regained the belt only three weeks after he lost it, and destroyed Chris Jericho at Fully Loaded.

Even though The Rock is the current WWF champ, he accomplished too little during the first six months of Y2K to overshadow Triple-H now.

BRANDON CAMERON
Indianapolis, IN

WRESTLING'S INFLUENCE

I was just watching a talk show, and the show's focus was wrestling's influence on children. I thought the show was pathetic. There are millions of wrestling fans in the world today. If wrestling is so influential, then why isn't every single fan in the hospital? I'm 16 years old, and I've been watching wrestling for as long as I can remember. I'm an "A-B-C" student, I've never been convicted of any kind of crime, and I've never ever hurt anybody. The only influence wrestling has on me is it makes me cheer, boo, and have fun. In other words, it entertains me. So to all the papers and news shows, quit

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED

welcomes readers' comments on any of our stories or columns.


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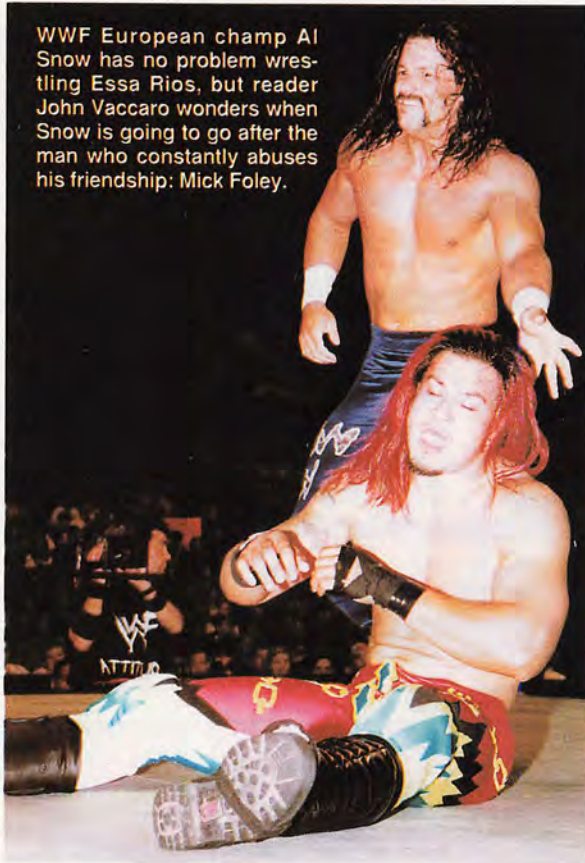
Letters preceded by a  indicate

letters left by fans on the *PWI*

Hotline (1-900-884-4PWI;

see ad elsewhere in this issue).

WWF European champ Al Snow has no problem wrestling Essa Rios, but reader John Vaccaro wonders when Snow is going to go after the man who constantly abuses his friendship: Mick Foley.



giving wrestling such a bad rap, because no matter what, wrestling will continue to be on TV.

TRAVIS RODSILER
Coldwater, MI

PROMISES, PROMISES

I am writing in response to Stu Saks' November column ("From The Desk Of ..."). I live in Maryland and went to The Great American Bash with a friend. We waited all night for Eric Bischoff's big announcement, but it never came. I'm just glad to know that I'm not the only person who felt ripped off.

LEE FITCHETT
Timonium, MD

KURT'S ONLY FAN?

After reading PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED's December 2000 issue, I must say that the "Press Conference" on Kurt Angle was superb! Kurt Angle is definitely a great entertainer with a flair for comedy. And he's a natural in the wrestling ring, too. His entrance music gets everyone pumped up, and I'd see no problem with him becoming the next WWF World heavyweight champion. He definitely has the potential.

PAUL DALE ROBERTS
Elk Grove, CA

HATE THE GAME, NOT THE PLAYER

Booker T's recent actions have me questioning his motives. Why wouldn't he count the pinfall for Scott Steiner when Steiner was trying to defeat then-WCW World champ Kevin Nash? Why would Booker T, after having regained the WCW World title by defeating Kevin Nash in a cage at Fall Brawl, help Vince Russo on the next night's *Nitro*?

Ever since Booker first won the title, he's been gradually changing. I hope he doesn't become everything he has always claimed to hate.

BRIAN RAGO
Whiteside, MO

MISSING DAWN

I find it hard to believe that Paul Heyman is having such a hard time of developing a viable storyline for Dawn Marie. With her obvious looks and charisma, no matter what she does is almost guaranteed to work. Paul needs to get her back on TV

consistently and back on TV fast.

CIS HARTEY
Claysville, PA

VAMPIRIC ARGUMENT

Unlike most of the professional wrestling fans out there, I'm a fan of Vampiro and not Sting. And while I thought your story on the two in your December issue was a good one ("Vampiro: Why His Relationship With Sting Went Up In Smoke"), I don't think you painted the whole picture.

Basically, Sting knows Vampiro's good. He knows that Vampiro could usurp his position in WCW. Sting also knows that if given the chance, he'd get along with Vampiro very well. But Sting doesn't want that. Sting wants Vampiro as an enemy, because with Vampiro as an enemy, he won't look like the bad guy when he takes him out.

PATRICK KAMPF
Cornell, IL

THAT AWESOME GUY

Even though I hear Mike Awesome isn't exactly thrilled with being WCW's "That '70s Guy," I think he's doing great with the gimmick. One thing that Awesome never showed in ECW was a sense of humor. Because of that, I



Has Paul Heyman gone crazy? Maybe. As reader Francis Hartey points out, only a fool would keep the beautiful Dawn Marie on the sidelines for so long.

never really thought the ECW fans took to him like they could have. Now, though, Awesome is complete. He's entertaining both inside and outside the ring.

Sure, "That '70s Guy" might be corny. But it works, so why not go with it?

ERIC COURT
Middlesex, England

WANNABE HOOCH

Scott Steiner should be WCW's next World heavyweight champion. Not Booker T, not Kevin Nash, not Bill Goldberg, not Jeff Jarrett, not Sting, and not Hulk Hogan. Scott Steiner is the man. I'd be his girl any day.

LINDA EARLEY
Page, NE □

PWI HOTLINE EXTRA!

YOUR ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTION OF THE WEEK!

Question of the Week: Should Chyna break up with Eddie Guerrero? (September 12 to September 18, 2000)

Hotline callers respond: "Yeah, I think Chyna should break up with Eddie," said Claudia Orkens of St. Paul, Minnesota. "He's not treating her right, and she could find a better guy anywhere."

"Chyna's a smart lady," said Robert Simmonds of Richmond, Virginia. "She'll break up with Eddie if she feels it's the right thing to do—and my feeling it is the right thing to do."

"If Chyna doesn't break up with Eddie, I'll be very disappointed," said Stacie Ramini of Edmonton, Alberta. "She's always been her own woman, and he's holding her down way too much. In my opinion, Eddie's gonna be history."

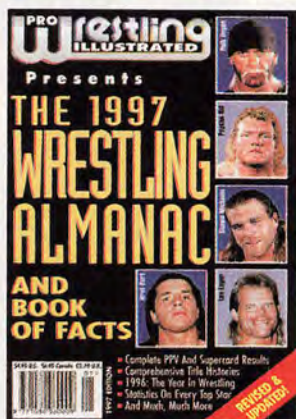
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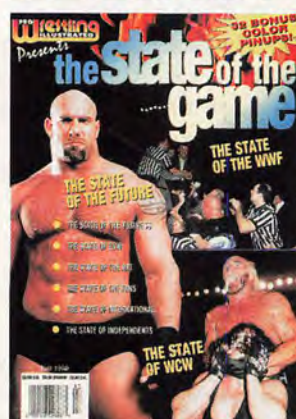
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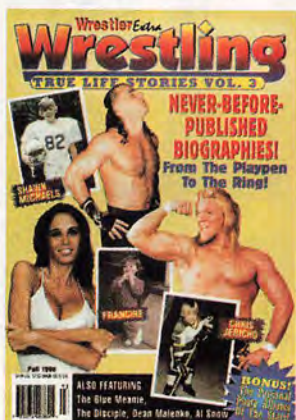
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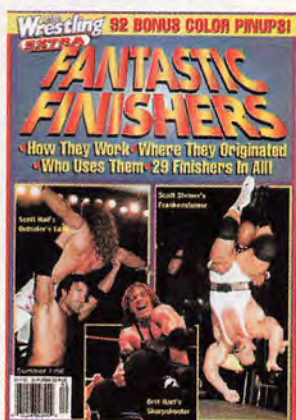
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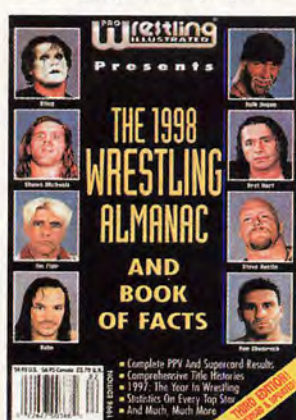
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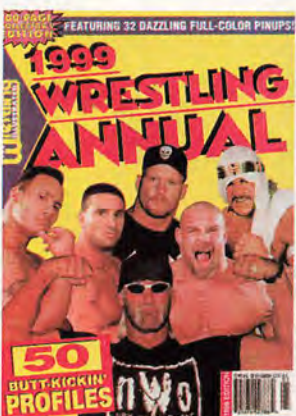
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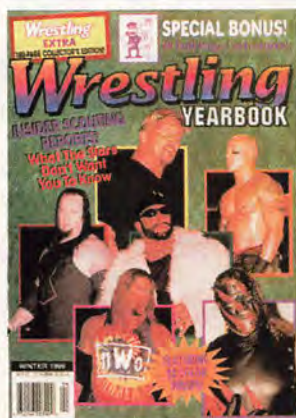
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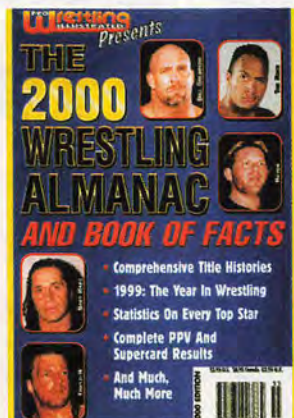
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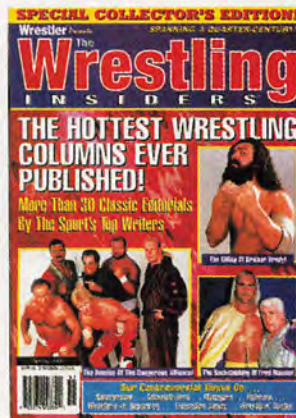
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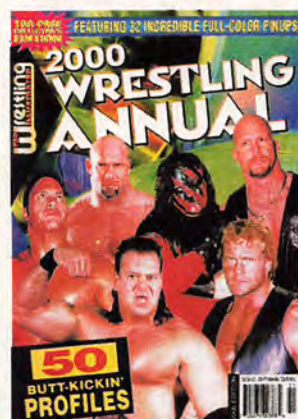
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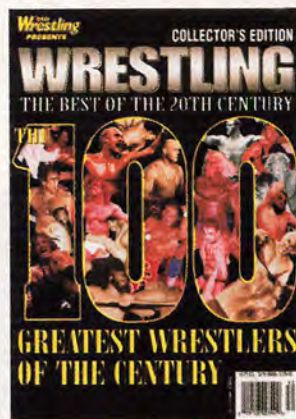
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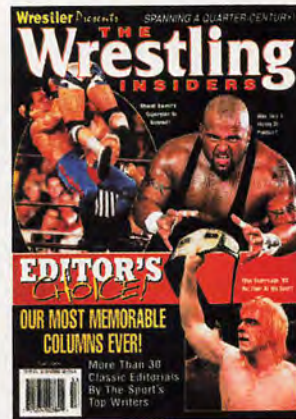
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MISSY HYATT: Queen For A Day For The King

By winning a recent match against bounty hunter Robert Fuller, Jerry Lawler earned the services of Missy Hyatt as his maid for a day. Matt Brock was there to chronicle a most unusual day in "The King's" palace!



Missy Hyatt knew it was going to be an unpleasant day when she arrived at Jerry Lawler's home and was told she'd have to change out of her dress and wear a shirt with "The King's" likeness on the front.

By Matt Brock

I'VE NEVER BEEN MARRIED. Oh, I've had offers, but I've always managed to escape in time. It's not something I regret; it's just the way I am.

I subscribe to the traditional view that a woman's place is the home. Fortunately (for my marital status), this viewpoint is both unpopular and impractical in today's world, so I've been free to spend my time on the road reporting on the events that shape the wrestling world. I enjoy my freedom and haven't missed being tied down by marriage one bit. Even if you don't believe that a woman's place is home wearing a kitchen apron,



Cleaning Jerry Lawler's boots had to be one of the *least* objectionable things Missy was forced to do when she was Lawler's maid for a day.

you must agree that her place is nowhere near a *ring* apron, working as a useless valet to some pretty boy in sequins. I

have no patience for the likes of Sunshine, Precious, Baby Doll, or Elizabeth, whose main contribution to wrestling seems to be flashing a little leg. The queen of valets is undoubtedly Missy Hyatt, and there is no other valet whom I despise more.

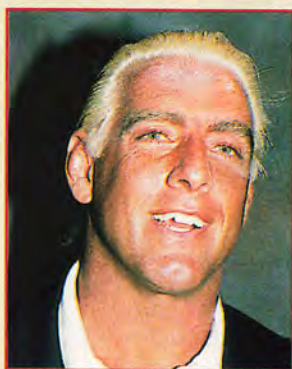
By the provisions of a contract for a recent Memphis match between Lawler and Robert Fuller (Eddie Gilbert's latest bounty hunter in his war against Lawler), the maid services of Missy Hyatt were up for grabs. "The King's" pinfall victory in that bout earned him a queen for a day—and the probability of a far



Missy wasn't amused when "The King" presented her with a toilet scrubbing brush (above). Yes, that meant she had to scrub his toilet (right).



PWI RATINGS September, 1988



Ric Flair

TOP 10

1. Ric Flair
2. Randy Savage
3. Sting
4. Curt Hennig
5. Ted DiBiase
6. Lex Luger
7. Terry Taylor
8. Hulk Hogan
9. Mike Rotundo
10. Jerry Lawler

TAG TEAMS

1. Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard
2. The Road Warriors
3. Demolition
4. The Fantastics
5. Lex Luger & Sting
6. The Midnight Express
7. Barbarian & Warlord
8. Paul Diamond & Pat Tanaka
9. Shaun & Steve Simpson
10. Bruce Hart & Brian Pillman

NWA

World champion: Ric Flair

1. Sting
2. Lex Luger
3. Steve Williams
4. Nikita Koloff
5. Larry Zbyszko
6. Mike Rotundo
7. Barry Windham
8. Al Perez
9. Jim Garvin
10. Rick Steiner

WWF

World champion: Randy Savage

1. The Honky Tonk Man
2. Ted DiBiase
3. Andre the Giant

4. Hulk Hogan
5. Brutus Beefcake
6. Hacksaw Duggan
7. Jake Roberts
8. Rick Rude
9. The Ultimate Warrior
10. Bam Bam Bigelow

AWA

World champion: Curt Hennig

1. Greg Gagne
2. Jerry Lawler
3. Wahoo McDaniel
4. Paul Diamond
5. Eddie Gilbert
6. Jeff Jarrett
7. Soldat Ustinov
8. Rick Morton
9. Pat Tanaka
10. Ricky Rice

WORLD CLASS

Heavyweight champion:

1. Iceman Parsons
1. Terry Taylor
2. Chris Adams
3. Kerry Von Erich
4. Michael Hayes
5. Kevin Von Erich
6. Terry Gordy
7. Eric Embry
8. Black Bart
9. Buddy Roberts
10. Bill Irwin

MOST POPULAR

1. Hulk Hogan
2. Sting
3. Randy Savage
4. Lex Luger
5. Hacksaw Duggan
6. Kerry Von Erich
7. Michael Hayes
8. The Ultimate Warrior
9. Jerry Lawler
10. Dusty Rhodes

MOST HATED

1. Barry Windham
2. Ted DiBiase
3. Andre the Giant
4. Ric Flair
5. The Honky Tonk Man
6. Eddie Gilbert
7. Curt Hennig
8. Rick Rude
9. Al Perez
10. Iceman Parsons

cleaner home when the day was complete!

So when Jerry invited me down to Memphis to report on Hyatt's day as a maid, I was honored. After all, I was the only print reporter invited, and I'm not one to turn down a scoop. I told "The King" that there was nothing in the world that would keep me from the pleasure of watching Missy cleaning, scrubbing, and laundering every corner of the Lawler castle.

I recall a similar good time watching Jimmy Garvin and Sunshine toil as David Von Erich's farmhands in 1983. After a full day of fence building, stable shoveling, and cow milking, both Garvin and his valet left Von Erich's ranch a little humbler than when they arrived. Humility is something from which Missy Hyatt could surely benefit. If she didn't learn her lesson back in 1986 when she was Dark Journey's maid for a day, maybe a man could do so.

I arrived promptly at nine o'clock in the morning and was helped out of my rental car by Missy. She was wearing a dirty apron, indicating that her day as Lawler's maid began early. Jerry ran out to greet me.

"I'm glad you're here, Matt," he said, glowing. "Missy's about to clean the bathroom. I knew you wouldn't want to miss *that!*" How right he was. We headed straight to the Lawler bathroom.

Although Jerry's success in the mat sport has enabled him to maintain a cleaning service for the past 10 years or so, Jerry told me that, anticipating a win, he had made special advance preparations for Hyatt's arrival the moment the Fuller match stipulation was announced: The bathroom hadn't been cleaned in nearly two weeks. Lawler's bathroom looked and smelled like a pig sty.

"Yuk!" Missy yelled, pinching her upturned nose. "There's *nothing* you can do, Jerry Lawler, that could compel *me* to clean this bathroom!" she squeaked in her typically annoying shrill whine. As she turned to leave, Lawler grabbed her by her shirt-tail, pulled her back, and shoved the contract by which he won her services under her face. Missy had no choice.

"Clean it!" "The King" demanded. Hyatt, realizing there was no way out, picked up a toilet-scrubbing brush (the veteran serviceman in me hoped that Jerry would have the *panache* and style to make her clean the bathroom with a tooth-brush) and got to work.

It was satisfying seeing Hyatt scrub a toilet. She's a high society dame who has no idea what an honest day's work *really* is. She reaps great benefits from the mat world, while contributing nothing. Even Eddie Gilbert—with whom I've had professional differences—wrestles tirelessly, turning



"You missed a spot!" Lawler cackled as he watched his maid scrub his floor. Hyatt didn't think anything about this was funny.



At first, Missy didn't expect tossing laundry into the washing machine to be all that horrible (above). Then she caught a whiff of some of the stuff she had to wash (left).

down no challengers. The same can be said for Lawler. But Hyatt is part of a disease that infects wrestling, and she could use a good dose of humility to learn her proper place in the mat world.

"Oh, Missy," Lawler instructed his servant, "we'll be out on the veranda. When you're done with the toilet, bring us some lunch. Nothing fancy, just broil up a few steaks, some vegetables. Then go down to the wine cellar and open a bottle of red Bordeaux, whatever year you think is best. And a bottle of beer for Matt."

As I'd expected, Missy was not a good cook. The steaks were charred to a leathery crisp. Lawler relaxed at poolside while Hyatt cooked, served, and cleared away our dishes.

The final stop of the day was "The King's" laundry room. Like the bathroom, everything was a mess. A complete cleaning was definitely necessary, and Missy was just the woman for the job. But since I had an afternoon plane to catch, I made for the door to say my goodbyes to my host.

"Wait, Matt, you can't leave now," Jerry said. "After she does my laundry, Missy's gonna wash and wax my car, then clean every window in the house and polish every piece of silver—that's 12 place settings plus accessories! You won't want to miss it!" I didn't, but I had to go.

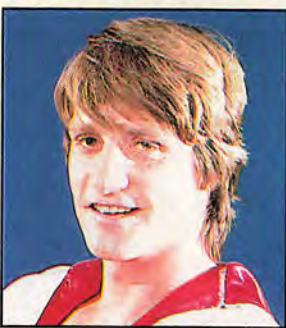
As I was leaving, I saw Missy daintily picking up piece after piece of filthy underwear, wincing in pain and touching them like they were radioactive waste. Although I was sad to go, I knew that this was the perfect ending to a perfect day. The frazzled look of defeat on Missy's aristocratic face will stay with me forever.

I hope the lesson she learned there will stay with her for as long. □

The cover: Oh, yes, it was supercard season again, and as usual, *PWI* was there to offer up comprehensive coverage of all the hottest shows, including WrestleMania IV (where Randy Savage won a tournament for the WWF World title), the very first Clash of the Champions (where we first found out how good Sting could be), the Crockett Cup (where Sting and Lex Luger won the big prize), and the AWA's Rage in the Cage (where Curt Hennig and Wahoo McDaniel had themselves a very bloody cage match).

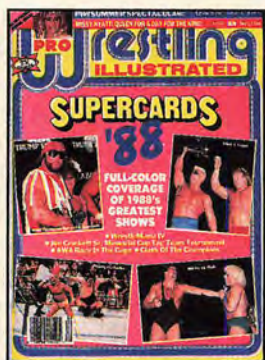


to answer in "Press Conference," as he had just betrayed Lex Luger and caused them to lose the NWA World tag title to Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard. After that happened, Windham joined Arn and Tully in The Four Horsemen. "I was doing all the work in the ring, doing all the bleeding and sweating, and all [Luger] wanted to do was bask in the glory and pose. I just couldn't take it anymore," he said.



the title shots, but he usually ended up getting himself disqualified.

Bad Chemistry: We bluntly asked the question, "Has Oliver Humperdink Failed As Bam Bam Bigelow's Manager?" in a headline. Most felt he had, since "The Beast From The East" wasn't accomplishing much in the WWF. As things turned out, Bam Bam never won anything significant under Humperdink.



On The Inside: Along with detailed rundowns on all the supercards, *PWI* presented some great color photographs of the shows. Who could forget the showdowns between Andre the Giant and Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair and Sting, Randy Savage and Ted DiBiase, and so many others?

Horsing Around: Barry Windham had some tough questions



Oh, Brother: Kevin Von Erich told *PWI* about his frustration over not being able to get a title match against World Class champion Iceman Parsons. Though he harbored no animosity toward his brother Kerry, he indirectly blamed him for this problem. Since Kerry hated Parsons so much, he was getting all





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WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Airplane spin | 31. Foreign object |
| 2. Armbar | 32. Full nelson |
| 3. Armdrag | 33. Giant swing |
| 4. Armlock | 34. Grapevine |
| 5. Arm stretch | 35. Hair pulling |
| 6. Arm whip | 36. Hammerlock |
| 7. Asian spike | 37. Head lock |
| 8. Bear hug | 38. Head stomp |
| 9. Biting | 39. Heart punch |
| 10. Body slam | 40. Hip roll |
| 11. Body tackle | 41. Irish whip |
| 12. Chicken wing | 42. Knee drop |
| 13. Choke | 43. Leglock |
| 14. Claw | 44. Manager interference |
| 15. Clothesline | 45. Monkey flip |
| 16. Cross body block | 46. Overhead toss |
| 17. Double axehandle | 47. Pole ram |
| 18. Drop kick | 48. Reverse chinlock |
| 19. Eagle split | 49. Rolling scissors |
| 20. Elbow smash | 50. Rope burn |
| 21. Eye gouge | 51. Savate kick |
| 22. Face rake | 52. Scissors grip |
| 23. Fireman's carry ram | 53. Shoulder breaker |
| 24. Flying body press | 54. Slingshot |
| 25. Flying clothesline | 55. Snap mare |
| 26. Flying drop kick | 56. Step-over toe hold |
| 27. Flying elbow drop | 57. Suplex |
| 28. Flying head butt | 58. Surfboard |
| 29. Flying mare | 59. Tumbuckle smash |
| 30. Forearm smash | 60. Wristlock |

SET-UP HOLDS

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 61. Abdominal stretch | 76. Figure four |
| 62. Atomic drop | 77. Flying leg drop |
| 63. Avalanche | 78. Gourd buster |
| 64. Backbreaker | 79. Indian death lock |
| 65. Backroll press | 80. Neckbreaker |
| 66. Belly to belly | 81. Piledriver |
| 67. Big splash | 82. Power bomb |
| 68. Boston crab | 83. Power slam |
| 69. Brain buster | 84. Russian sickle |
| 70. Bulldog | 85. Sleeper |
| 71. Camel clutch | 86. Slingshot suplex |
| 72. Cobra clutch | 87. Small package |
| 73. Cradle | 88. Spine buster |
| 74. Crucifix | 89. Sunset flip |
| 75. DDT | 90. Superplex |

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☐ 1. Big Ben



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☐ 5. Wildfire Johnny Rage



☐ 6. Eric Darkstrom



☐ 7. Nook the Secret Weapon



☐ 8. Derek Craven



☐ 9. El Diablo Sanchez



☐ 10. Tygar Singh

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WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES)

Wear-Down Holds: Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

Set-Up Holds: Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

Finishing Hold: Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.

Opponents: Check the box below each wrestler you wish to challenge.

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED®

TOP 10

- 1 THE ROCK**
272, Miami, FL
(1) WWF World champion
- 2 BOOKER T**
250, Houston, TX
(9) WCW World champion
- 3 CHRIS BENOIT**
218, Edmonton, Alberta
(7) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 4 KENSUKE SASAKI**
251, Tokyo, Japan
(4) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 5 JERRY LYNN**
224, Minneapolis, MN
(-) ECW World champion
- 6 TRIPLE-H**
284, Greenwich, CT
(3) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 7 RHINO**
285, Detroit, MI
(-) ECW TV champion
- 8 EDDIE GUERRERO**
221, El Paso, TX
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 9 JEFF JARRETT**
230, Nashville, TN
(-) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
- 10 KURT ANGLE**
233, Pittsburgh, PA
(10) No. 4 contender: WWF World title



Jerry Lynn

TAG TEAMS

- 1 JEFF & MATT HARDY**
Combined weight: 422 pounds
(4) WWF World tag team champions
- 2 TONY MAMALUKE & LITTLE GUIDO MARITATO**
Combined weight: 420 pounds
(5) ECW World tag team champions
- 3 SATOSHI KOJIMA & HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
Combined weight: 493 pounds
(3) IWGP International tag team champions
- 4 JUVENTUD GUERRERA & REY MISTERIO JR.**
Combined weight: 305 pounds
(2) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 5 CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
Combined weight: 465 pounds
(1) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 6 YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI & MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
Combined weight: 428 pounds
(8) No. 1 contenders: ECW World tag title
- 7 MARK JINDRAK & SEAN O'HAIRE**
Combined weight: 503 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 8 BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(7) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 9 KRONIC**
Combined weight: 622 pounds
(6) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 10 BULL BUCHANAN & THE GOODFATHER**
Combined weight: 665 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:

- BOOKER T**
(2) 250, Houston, TX
- 1—LANCE STORM**
(1) 231, Calgary, Alberta
 - 2—JEFF JARRETT**
(5) 230, Nashville, TN
 - 3—BILL GOLDBERG**
(3) 283, Tulsa, OK
 - 4—SCOTT STEINER**
(4) 275, Detroit, MI
 - 5—STING**
(7) 260, Venice Beach, CA
 - 6—SHANE DOUGLAS**
(8) 255, Pittsburgh, PA
 - 7—MIKE AWESOME**
(6) 285, Tampa, FL
 - 8—MIKE SANDERS**
(-) 230, Atlanta, GA
 - 9—BIG VITO**
(10) 265, Staten Island, NY
 - 10—SGT. AWOL**
(-) 320, Ocean Grove, NJ

WWF

World Champion:

- THE ROCK**
(C) 272, Miami, FL
- 1—EDDIE GUERRERO**
(1) 221, El Paso, TX
 - 2—CHRIS BENOIT**
(3) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
 - 3—TRIPLE-H**
(2) 284, Greenwich, CT
 - 4—KURT ANGLE**
(4) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
 - 5—KANE**
(5) 345, parts unknown
 - 6—STEVE BLACKMAN**
(8) 245, Annville, PA
 - 7—RIKISHI**
(-) 424, San Francisco, CA
 - 8—TAZZ**
(-) 248, Red Hook, NY
 - 9—THE UNDERTAKER**
(6) 328, Death Valley, CA
 - 10—CHRIS JERICHO**
(9) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba

ECW

World Champion:

- JERRY LYNN**
(4) 224, Minneapolis, MN
- 1—RHINO**
(1) 285, Detroit, MI
 - 2—JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(C) 227, Waterbury, CT
 - 3—STEVE CORINO**
(7) 215, Sea Isle City, NJ
 - 4—KID KASH**
(3) 230, Johnson City, TN
 - 5—ROB VAN DAM**
(2) 237, Battle Creek, MI
 - 6—C.W. ANDERSON**
(-) 237, Winston-Salem, NC
 - 7—PSICOSIS**
(9) 200, Tijuana, Mexico
 - 8—NOVA**
(-) 214, Bricktown, NJ
 - 9—MIKEY WHIPWRECK**
(-) 204, New York, NY
 - 10—CHRIS CHETTI**
(-) 239, Amityville, NY

NWA

NWA Champion:

- MIKE RAPADA**
(-) 231, Colorado Springs, CO
- 1—STONE MOUNTAIN**
(3) 350, Stone Mountain, GA
 - 2—JUGGERNAUT**
(2) 217, Fort Worth, TX
 - 3—REDD DOGG BEGNAUD**
(4) 274, Lafayette, LA
 - 4—NICK DINSMORE**
(5) 226, Jefferson, IN
 - 5—911**
(6) 312, Philadelphia, PA
 - 6—AWESOME ARPIN**
(7) 496, Parkersburg, WV
 - 7—GARY STEELE**
(8) 241, London, England
 - 8—CHRIS HARRIS**
(-) 240, Atlanta, GA
 - 9—SABU**
(-) 220, Bombay, India
 - 10—KEVIN NORTHCUTT**
(1) 348, Chalmette, LA

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended October 5, 2000

BIG JAPAN PRO WRESTLING: Champion—John Zandig; 1—Shadow WX; 2—Ryuji Yamakawa; 3—Tomooki Honma; 4—Abdullah The Butcher; 5—Beater; 6—Men's Teoh; 7—Benkei; 8—Kanikaze; 9—Jun Kasai; 10—Shumme Matsuzaki.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Inferno; 1—Glen Osbourne; 2—J.J. The Ring Crew Guy; 3—Cheetah Master; 4—Ty Street; 5—Russ Haas; 6—Vince Goodnite; 7—Charlie Haas; 8—Low Ki; 9—Scoot Andrews; 10—Mr. Ooh La La.

FAR NORTH WRESTLING: Champion—Seth James; 1—Cyrus Steele; 2—Bison; 3—T. Rantula; 4—Bigg Playa; 5—Dennis Gregory; 6—Matt Borne; 7—Toby Cline; 8—Ricky Martinez; 9—Jay Pumper; 10—Brian O.

FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS WRESTLING: Champion—Kodo Fuyuki; 1—Hayabusa; 2—Masato Tanaka; 3—Mr. Gannosuke; 4—Tetsuo Kuroda; 5—GOEMON; 6—Kintaro Kanemura; 7—Hiideki Hosaka; 8—Gedo; 9—Jado; 10—Hisakatsu Oya.

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Jimmy Cicero; 1—Julio Fantastico; 2—Bruiser; 3—King Kong Bundy; 4—Tom Brandi; 5—Gillberg; 6—Chad Bowman; 7—Corporal Punishment; 8—Ronnie Zuko; 9—Adam Flash; 10—The Policy.

NORTH AMERICAN WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Gino Blanchard; 1—Bob Ozark; 2—Dorty Reid; 3—The Intimidator; 4—Shane Hooker; 5—Ace Sterling; 6—John Stone; 7—Domitri; 8—Mr. Breeze; 9—Johnny Smalls; 10—Tommy Brooks.

NWA WILDSIDE: Champion—Stone Mountain; 1—Jessie Taylor; 2—Eddie Golden; 3—Terry Knight; 4—David Young; 5—Onyx; 6—Rick Michaels; 7—A.J. Styles; 8—Romeo Bliss; 9—Scottie Wrenn; 10—J.C. Dazz.

OKLAHOMA PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Renegade; 1—Rocco Valentino; 2—Bull Schmitt; 3—Chief Red Eagle; 4—Vinnie Valentino; 5—Bolo; 6—Son of Bolo; 7—AWOL; 8—Joey Casanova; 9—Big Daddy Moore; 10—Heather Savage.

PRO WRESTLING NOAH: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Jun Akiyama; 2—Mitsuharu Misawa; 3—Kenta Kobashi; 4—Akira Tave; 5—Yoshinari Ogawa; 6—Yoshihiro Takayama; 7—Takao Omori; 8—Masao Inoue; 9—Jun Izumida; 10—Satoru Asako.

SOUTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Scab; 1—Cham Pain; 2—Juice; 3—Big Slam; 4—Natrone Steele; 5—Q Sic; 6—William Wealth; 7—Kross; 8—Major DeBeers; 9—Lazarus; 10—Rick Link.

TEXAS WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Sho Funaki; 1—Tornado; 2—Michael Shane; 3—Oz; 4—Rudy Boy Gonzalez; 5—Chris Krueger; 6—Jeromy Sage; 7—Stryker; 8—Bonecrusher; 9—Wayne Knight; 10—Ruckus.

UNIFIED CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Al Savage; 1—Chad Cheetum; 2—Tony Sweat; 3—Joe Kane; 4—Big Nasty; 5—Steve Southern; 6—Bob Armstrong; 7—Frank Smith; 8—Tommy Martinelli; 9—Midnight Rider; 10—Raine Quapone.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

KENSUKE SASAKI

(C) 251, Tokyo, Japan

- 1—**MANABU NAKANISHI**
(3) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 2—**YUJI NAGATA**
(5) 228, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—**MASA CHONO**
(9) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 4—**HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
(6) 270, Tokyo, Japan
- 5—**SATOSHI KOJIMA**
(8) 223, Tokyo, Japan
- 6—**JUSHIN LIGER**
(2) 222, Hiroshima, Japan
- 7—**SHIRO KOSHINAKA**
(4) 217, Tokyo, Japan
- 8—**TATSUHIITO TAKAIWA**
(1) 227, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—**KOJI KANEMOTO**
(10) 205, Osaka, Japan
- 10—**TATSUMI FUJINAMI**
(7) 234, Oita, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

TITLES VACANT

- 1—**TOSHIKI KAWADA**
(1) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
- 2—**GENICHIRO TENRYU**
(2) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—**STAN HANSEN**
(9) 322, Borger, TX
- 4—**STEVE WILLIAMS**
(10) 265, Norman, OK
- 5—**MIKE BARTON**
(5) 263, Austin, TX
- 6—**MASA FUCHI**
(3) 225, Tokyo, Japan
- 7—**MASA CHONO**
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 8—**TAIYO KEA**
(8) 235, Honolulu, HI
- 9—**JOHNNY SMITH**
(6) 235, Manchester, England
- 10—**JOHNNY ACE**
(4) 250, San Bernardino, CA

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

UNIVERSO DOS MIL

(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

- 1—**PIERROTH JR.**
(3) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico
- 2—**CIEN CARAS**
(9) 240, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico
- 3—**RAYO DE JALISCO JR.**
(2) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 4—**VILLANO III**
(1) 220, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—**NEGRO CASAS**
(7) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
- 6—**DR. WAGNER JR.**
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 7—**SCORPIO JR.**
(-) 195, Nezahualcoyotli, Mexico
- 8—**FUERZA GUERRERA**
(-) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
- 9—**TARZAN BOY**
(-) 218, Mexico City, Mexico
- 10—**FELINO**
(-) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:

LATIN LOVER

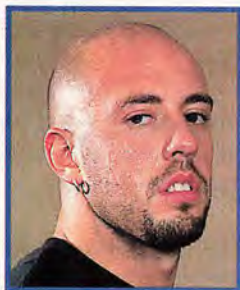
(C) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

- 1—**HEAVY METAL**
(2) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2—**PERRO AGUAYO JR.**
(5) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
- 3—**HECTOR GARZA**
(1) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
- 4—**SUPER CRAZY**
(3) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—**PIRATA MORGAN**
(4) 221, Mexico City, Mexico
- 6—**ABISMO NEGRO**
(6) 210, Pachuca, Mexico
- 7—**JERRY ESTRADA**
(9) 239, Montclova, Mexico
- 8—**CIBERNETICO**
(8) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
- 9—**EL TEXANO**
(-) 225, Mexico City, Mexico
- 10—**EL CANEK**
(7) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

Ratings Analysis

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

An in-Credible run ends ... Okay, so maybe it wasn't an incredible run, but for the first time since our September 2000 issue, **Justin Credible** did not make our Top 10 this



Justin Credible

month. For him to remain atop ECW from late-April until October 1 was a damn impressive feat. As the holder of the ECW World heavyweight belt, he fought off challenger after challenger amid a lot of talk that maybe he wasn't a deserving champion. He proved a lot to a lot of people during his five-month-plus reign and might not have lost the belt to **Jerry Lynn** at Anarchy Rulz on October 1 had Lynn not had his hometown fans in St. Paul, Minnesota, cheering him on.

As a result of the win and several other key victories over the course of the month, Lynn finally gets his rightful place in the Top 10 (number five). As for Credible, well, we predict he'll be back up there in the Top 10 quite soon. He's too intense, too ruthless, and much, much too determined not to get another run with that ECW World title strapped around his waist. Don't you find it hard to believe now that at the beginning of the year 2000, he was considered a *tag team* specialist in ECW? That seems like an awfully long time ago now.

And while Credible takes his leave from the Top 10, **Rhino** jumps right back into the mix. Though his win over **Rob Van Dam** at Anarchy Rulz will go down as a very tainted one thanks to the actions of biased referee **Danny Daniels**, it was still a huge win at an important pay-per-view show. Most observers expected RVD to regain that TV title from Rhino in his first match for the gold against him. It obviously didn't happen that way. Though everyone has been wondering how long it will be before RVD finally demands his shot at the ECW World title, maybe we should ask that same question about Rhino. He could present a lot of problems to either Lynn or Credible.

Who's the front-runner? The Achievement Awards 2000 ballots had already started pouring in at the time of this writing. Of course the most important of all the awards is Wres-

tlar of the Year. We're not going to tell you who the early leader in that race is, but a glance at the Top 10 in this month's ratings reveals a pretty decent list of top contenders. **The Rock**, at number one in the Top 10 for the third straight issue, remains a top contender along with **Triple-H**, who has consistently been in our Top 10 even after losing the WWF championship.

Booker T, who comes in at number two this month, looks like WCW's only real chance at this point, though he will be hurt by the fact that he keeps losing and winning and losing and winning the WCW championship and the fact that it's been an absolutely abysmal year for WCW in general.

If the votes in the WWF and WCW are split enough, perhaps the aforementioned Justin Credible and Rhino could sneak into contention. Don't miss the April 2001 issue of this magazine. That's where you'll find all the results of the voting. It goes on sale at your local newsstand on January 23, 2001.

Not a misprint! We tried to give you a better understanding of the constantly changing international scene in our "State Of International Wrestling" on page 46. Because of the emergence of **Mitsuharu Misawa's** Pro Wrestling NOAH promotion, All-Japan, where Misawa used to wrestle, and New Japan have established a working relationship.

Because long-time New Japan standout **Masa Chono** has already taken advantage of that relationship and made an impact in All-Japan, we have ranked him in both companies this month (number three in New Japan, number seven in AJPW). Now if he can find a way to do something in NOAH, that would really be a feat. Politics in the Orient, however, are extremely likely to prevent that from happening.

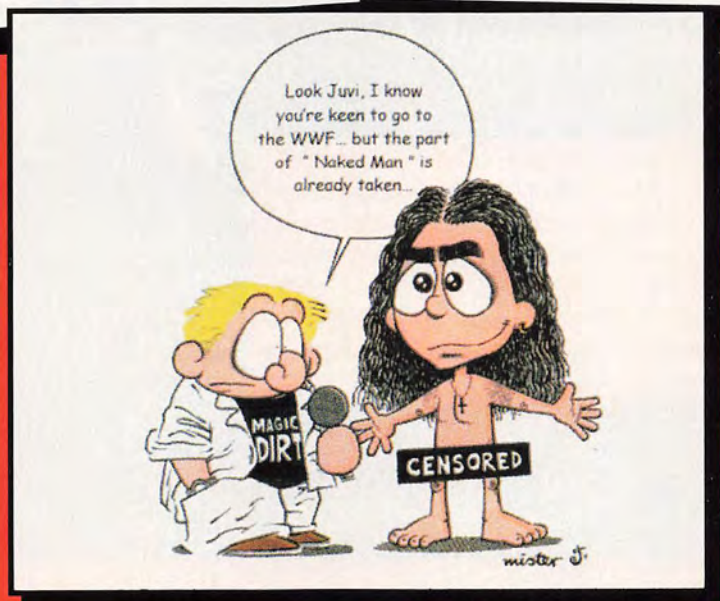
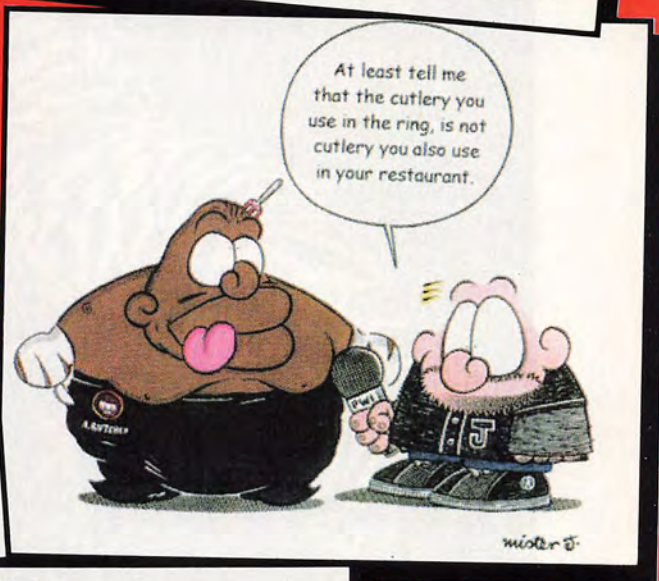
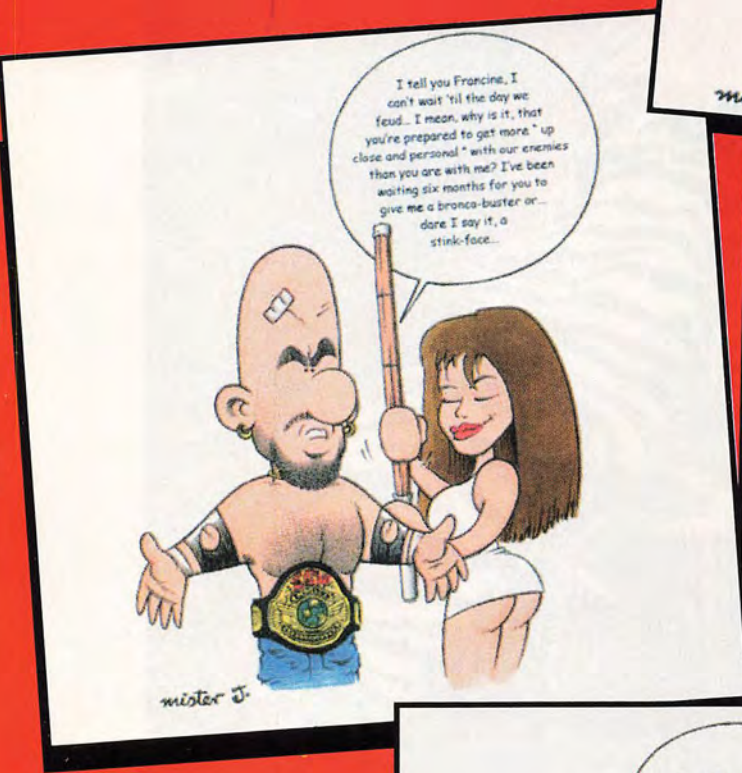


Masa Chono

That's all for this month! If you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

drawing BLOOD

By Jason Conlan



HOT SHOT



Even the devil gets the hell kicked out of him once in a while, and the horny Rey Mysterio Jr. is proof of that. Usually speedy enough to keep a safe distance from the always-in-the-mood-for-munchies Kronic, Mysterio made the mistake of turning left when he should have turned right and got caught in Brian Adams' large wingspan. And when Adams readied him for his full-nelson slam, Mysterio was more than a little worried that he was about to enter into his own personal Armageddon.

Photo by Vern Verna

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